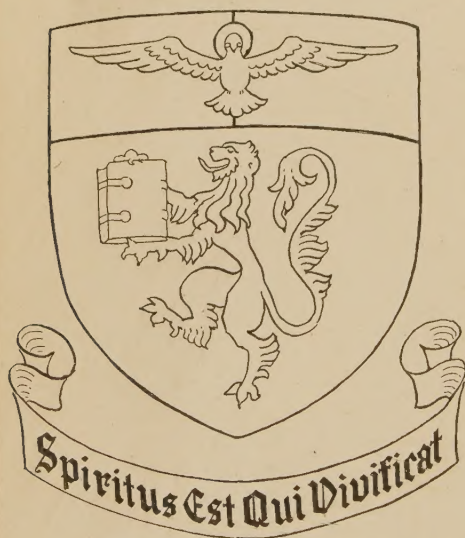




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*IN AN INDIAN ABBEY*



*IN AN INDIAN ABBEY:*  
*SOME PLAIN TALKING ON THEOLOGY*  
*by*  
*JOSEPH RICKABY, S. J.*

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# IN AN INDIAN ABBEY

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ὦ Σώκρατες, ῥαδίως σὺ Αἰγυπτίους καὶ ὀπαδαποὺς ἂν ἐθέλῃς λόγους ποιεῖς.

Plato, *Phaedrus*, 274 B.

οὐδ' αὐτοὺς ἡμᾶς λαυθάνομεν ἐν λόγοις ἀτόποις γεγονότες. ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστι περὶ πραγμάτων μεγάλων μὴ μεγάλας προσχρησάμενον ἀρχαῖς ἐπὶ τὸ εἰκὸς τῇ δόξῃ προελθεῖν.

Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum*, 418 F.

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# IN AN INDIAN ABBEY

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## PREFACE

**T**HIS Indian Abbey, Thall Ghât Abbey, is an airy creation, a sort of West Front, behind which will be found Dialogues dealing with theological difficulties, as they occurred to the mind of a lonely student in a great University, and as he was able to solve them.

Pope Leo XIII is said, in an audience that he gave, to have recommended the trying of hypotheses in theology as a means of advancing the science. Physical science is advanced in that way. None would deny that theology has advanced as a science since the days of St. Gregory the Great. Few would assert that theology stands now in its meridian perfection, and that no attempt is needed to advance it further. Not every hypothesis does advance science. Some are unscientific and should be ruled out from the first. Thus no physicist would look at an essay founded on Perpetual Motion or Ptolemaic Astronomy. A sane and useful physical hypothesis must proceed upon those data of physical science which are by this time absolutely settled. A sane and useful theological hypothesis must proceed upon the articles of Catholic faith. No good can come of an hypothesis involving Pantheism, or Modernism, Spiritualism, or Theosophy.

An hypothesis should be verified by experience. This is readily done in physical science, at least for many cases. In theology, in lieu of sensible experience we have the infallible utterances of the Church. The truths of revelation are limited in number and do not grow : these should all be considered ere the hypothesis is set on foot. When it is on foot, and has walked abroad, it may be tried and tested by the living authority

of the Church ; and if by her condemned as inconsistent with revelation, it must be considered broken and set aside. Even so, the framer may have discovered something by making it.

The uses of theological hypothesis are the advancement of theology, by showing what is therein tenable and more or less probable ; “ the consolation of the faithful ” (*C.G.*, I, 9, p. 8) ; and the smoothing of the path of inquirers by showing that what Newman calls “ the adamantine rocks which base the throne of the Everlasting ” (*Mixed Congregations*, p. 269), to men who approach with good will, are not so formidable as they might seem. I may instance one hypothesis of Newman’s own, which he added in 1882 to the *Grammar of Assent* (pp. 502, 503, ed. 1909), on the possibility of *refrigeria* in eternal punishment.

Such are the principles on which I have framed the hypotheses that appear in these “ Conversations.” One or two may be astounding. Are they on that sole account absurd ? Who does not expect to be astounded when he passes out of this life ?

J. R.

CAMPION HALL,  
OXFORD.

1904-1919.



# *IN AN INDIAN ABBEY*

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# IN AN INDIAN ABBEY

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## INTRODUCTION

IN the year 2020 of the Christian era there lay on his deathbed one Nathanael Parsby, a wealthy London banker, a Catholic. His financial operations had been surprisingly successful: nevertheless he had enjoyed throughout his whole career, and not undeservedly, a spotless reputation for honour and probity. But now coming to die, he came likewise to reflect that as *in much speaking there will not fail to be sin* (Proverbs x. 19), so in much money-making there can hardly fail to have been some iniquitous pressure upon some man's labour or some man's need. Unconscious, however, of any definite instances of such injustice, the dying banker resolved upon what theologians call *restitutio in causa pias*; and doing more than he was strictly bound to do, he proceeded to do it magnificently. By his will he set aside one million sterling, not for Westminster Cathedral, by that time all beautiful within as well as stately without; not for hospitals, or purposes of education, to which in his lifetime he had been a generous benefactor; but for a department of good work which no one hitherto had ever thought of endowing. Much of his money had been made from India, British India as it still remained down to the year 2020. His plan was to found in that country an Abbey, the main occupation of whose monks was to be oral discussion with any inquirer who might resort thither for the solution of his difficulties on any point of theology, philosophy, biblical criticism, history, anthropology, or biology, bearing upon the Catholic faith. There were to be twenty-five monks in all. They took no vows, but made a promise of stability and residence in the Abbey for five years, at the end of which period the promise was renewable at the wish of the monk and

by consent of the fraternity, and so till twenty-five years had expired, upon which consummation the monk retired upon a pension, quitted his frock, and became a member of the Board of Directors in England. As used to be the rule for the fellows of Colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, residence at the Abbey involved the obligation of celibacy so long as the residence lasted. The monks were all Catholics, but not priests. Their conventual religious duties were the daily hearing of Mass and the recitation of an Office in choir which occupied half an hour a day. It will be seen that the names "monk" and "abbey" were somewhat loosely applied: but Mr. Earsby thought that these religious titles added grandeur and solemnity to his foundation, and experience proved that he had judged correctly. To keep up the supply of monks, there were funds for aiding the education of boys at school and young men at the two ancient English Universities: the Board of Directors at home looked after that. The locality of Thall Ghât Abbey cannot be specified, beyond saying that it lay among the hills somewhere to the north of Bombay. The idle globe-trotter should be warned that even if he succeeded in penetrating to Thall Ghât, he might still be at a loss in trying to identify the Abbey buildings. The institution is not a show place: it is the resort of the earnest inquirer; and for any who will prove himself such there are means, not to be explained here, for obtaining a through ticket from Charing Cross to Thall Ghât Station. Better not consider the matter too curiously; the ticket is obtainable, but not by the vain and frivolous, nor by your Special Correspondent. A pure air of philosophy, unbreathable by the multitude, hangs about Thall Ghât Abbey.

The *locutorium*, a large wing of the building, is divided into parlours, and every parlour bears a name, "Biblical Criticism," "Anthropology," etc., showing what sort of difficulties are discussed there, and to every parlour there is a monk assigned, a specialist in that branch of study. There is also a *refectorium*, where visitors are regaled with fare suited to the stomach of a philosopher, rather of the Pythagorean than of the Epicurean school. The Abbey Church commands the admiration of all who see it.



Some of the former monks, now back in England, have preserved notes of the conversations that they have held. These do not seem to have been of the most intellectual; and it is hoped that minutes of discussions better worth preserving may be secured and given to the public some day. Meanwhile, to meet a curiosity about the Abbey which has found expression in various quarters, these conversations are reported with the consent of the Lord Abbot and of the Board of Directors.

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## ERRATA

*p.* 40, third line from bottom, the words "in existence" to be added before "of the thoughts of God."

*p.* 80, third line from bottom, "necessity" to read "certainty."

*p.* 81, second line from top, "necessity" to read "certainty"; ninth line from top, "necessity" to read "certainty."



# IN AN INDIAN ABBEY

## CONVERSATION I

### MEGALOMANIA

*Dom Ithmael.* I hope you like India.

*Mr. Prince.* I am delighted with my visit to this ancient and populous country. Already I begin to enter into the good-natured disdain and amused pity with which the Asiatic regards his European brother, the pragmatical, the successful, but still the younger and less wise brother. Your Brahman, like Pharaoh of old, is the *scion of ancient kings* (Isa. xix. 11), and never loses sight of his lineage. That consoles him for the loss of his inheritance, gone to strangers. They may take his land, they cannot take his blue blood away, nor his hereditary wisdom. This reflection brings me to the errand on which I have travelled hither. My difficulty, vague, and hard to formulate, but still keenly felt, is the littleness of theological conceptions as compared with the vastness of nature and the interminable ascent backwards of human history and development. No theologian seems to realise how big the universe is, how old and how multitudinous is humanity. Man nevertheless is but a speck in the totality of existence, and Christendom scarce a thousandth part of that speck.

*Dom Ithmael.* But suppose man alone has intelligence, what then? οὗτος πέπνυται, τὰ δὲ σκιάι ἄσσουσι. Is not your one mind or mine better than all the dreary volume, 85,000 miles in diameter, of water and steaming fog, which they call the planet Jupiter?

*Mr. Prince.* But how do you know that man alone has intelligence?

*Dom Ithmael.* I do not know it : but if I choose to say so, what science can argue the contrary? Leaving aside the angels, who as incorporeal beings are not objects of physical science, we have not a shred of evidence, nor a glint of experience, to indicate the existence of any created intelligence other than human ; and all that we know of planets and fixed stars points to surroundings in which human beings cannot possibly exist. The earth is comparatively a tiny star ; but if intelligence lives and breathes only on earth, and nowhere else in the starry heavens, can we wonder that earth has been selected for that extraordinary divine visitation which makes the central mystery of Christianity?

*Mr. Prince.* You mean the Incarnation?

*Dom Ithmael.* Yes.

*Mr. Prince.* I confess that telescope and spectroscope have established nothing against the *a priori* credibility of the Incarnation. But how about the antiquity of man? Your Bible ties us to 6,000 or at the utmost 8,000 years.

*Dom Ithmael.* Pardon me, dear sir, but, so far as I know, there is for us no revealed system of chronology.

*Mr. Prince.* You surprise me. What about the years of the patriarchs as numbered in Genesis?

*Dom Ithmael.* Let me explain myself. In the first place, the figures which we read in our copies of the Old Testament are grievously suspect of corruption. The Hebrew notation, using letters for numbers, easily breeds confusion. Then the Jews were superstitious about numbers, and manipulated them for allegorical purposes. They shared to the full the tendency of all nations to magnify the events of their own history, the muster-roll of their armies and the multitude of the slain. This manipulation of numbers can be detected in the earliest extant written documents, the Babylonian bricks, where the rest of the writing stands in its original integrity, but the



numbers in some cases have manifestly been tampered with. We are thus confronted with a fair probability of a corruption of the original biblical text on this head of numbers. But neither did the original author reckon and enumerate with the accuracy of a Thucydides. Such Hellenic and Western fashion was not the way of his people: his contemporaries for whom he wrote did not expect it. Of this we have proof in the first seventeen verses of St. Matthew's gospel. Matthew the publican, accustomed though he was to cast up figures in the receipt of custom, nevertheless tells us gravely, quoting as it appears some document in his hands, that there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Captivity, and fourteen from the Captivity to Messiah. Now as the Old Testament clearly bears witness, all these fourteens are understatements. Juda, Phares, Esron, Aram, Aminadab, and Naasson, represent the 430 years that Israel was in Egypt (Exod. xii. 40; Num. i. 7); some generation must be omitted there. *Joram begat Ozias*, that is, he was his great-great-grandfather (4 Kings xi-xiv), as Josias was grandfather of Jechonias (4 Kings xxiii. 34; xxiv. 6). *A pari* we are not sure that there are not generations dropped in the genealogy of the patriarchs (Gen. xi); *e.g.*, that Heber at a certain age did not become the father of a child, who was not Phaleg himself, but Phaleg's remote ancestor: or "Phaleg," perhaps, is the name of a dynasty, like "Pharaoh." My position obliges me to put my best intelligence and my most honest thought at the service of the Catholic Church. Well, then, honestly and to the utmost of my intelligence, I cannot tell when Adam lived. His date is to me simply an unknown figure. Consequently I laugh to scorn any taunt levelled against me as a Christian believer, about women found to have been combing their hair "six thousand years before Eve awoke in Eden," or about joiners, fragments of whose work is still extant, having been "dead sixteen thousand years when Adam was created." I am profoundly unmoved by the enormous antiquity postulated for lake-dwelling man, and beyond him for river-drift man. Shall it be ten thousand years, or ten hundred thousand, that we assign to the past duration of the

human race? I confess, I find these high figures arbitrary and improbable : but as the Bible leaves man's age an uncertainty, and the Church has no tradition on the subject over and above the written word of Genesis, any amateur anthropologist may, like the great Danube, rolling free, unwind his *years*, unmarked of me.\*

*Mr. Prince.* I see you are not afraid of modern thought. You have almost dispelled my difficulty ; but, as a matter of imagination rather than of intellect, I was much impressed by a notable device that I saw some three months ago. It was a long hut, a thousand feet long. A scale of feet ran along the whole length of the erection, and a printed notice informed the observer that every foot represented a thousand years of human history. The whole history of the Christian Church was crowded into the two feet next the door. It did make Christianity look very small, when one came to the door at the other end, and there saw a figure of preglacial man, as he stood 998,000 B.C. And, as though history improved the further one went back from Christianity, the more distant end of the hut was laid out as a beautiful orangery.

*Dom Ithmael.* You speak of doors. Surely there was no door, or containing wall, at the end by which you entered ?

*Mr. Prince.* Of course there was : that is how Christianity came to be so huddled up.

*Dom Ithmael.* Well, at your return to Europe bear my compliments to the proprietor of the hut, and tell him to take away that door and knock down that wall. I have not lived so long as some of my forbears, but don't reproach me with

\* " The Book of Genesis nowhere makes any direct statement as to the age of the human race, and although at first sight it might seem as if the genealogies of the Patriarchs were meant to supply data for an approximate inference, any such inference would be hazardous in the extreme, for the simple reason that we do not know sufficient of the plan on which these tables are constructed. Hence it is agreed among all the modern commentators, Catholic as well as others, that the Bible leaves the date of man's creation an open question, and confines itself to the declaration that Adam was the first parent of the race, whose own date must, therefore, be pushed back till it sufficiently precedes the dates, whatever they may be, which history and prehistoric archæology postulate for the earliest men."—Father Sydney Smith, in *The Month* for September, 1904.

the comparative fewness of my days : I am not dead yet—you understand ?

*Mr. Prince.* Yes, you mean that Christianity is not yet a thing of the past : it still lives ; and its history is receiving daily increment. That hut is a misconstruction ; and, now I think of it, it ignores Tennyson :

*Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.*

*Dom Ithmael.* It assumes, μεγαλομανικῶς, that a “big long time” means a “good old time.” Did the contriver really admire the glacial ages, which figure so largely in the extension of his hut ? For the Christian there remains the obvious reply, that, so far as gospel principles have prevailed, the two thousand years of Christianity are worth all the rest of human history. Then, again, Christianity is a religion of the future. It claims attention chiefly as carrying the promise of the future. It inculcates *justice and chastity* in view of *the judgment to come* (Acts xxiv. 25). *Vitam aeternam* and *per omnia saecula saeculorum* are its distinctive formularies. Your friend’s orangery was put at the wrong end of his thousand-foot hut. By the way, what is the good of oranges ?

*Mr. Prince.* Why, for man to look at and, still more, to eat.

*Dom Ithmael.* As emblems of human good, those oranges should never have been employed to decorate palaeolithic periods of primitive savagery. Christianity should be represented, according to its promises, as opening out into a new Eden, better guarded than that wherein Adam and Eve fell, safe from intrusion of serpent and sin. *And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations thereinto ; and there shall not enter into it anything unclean ; and lo, a river of running water, clear as crystal ; and on this side and that the tree of life, every month yielding its fruit, and its leaves for the healing of the nations ; and no accursed thing shall be there ; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be there ; and his servants shall wait upon him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be upon their foreheads* (Apoc. xxii).

*Mr. Prince.* These are great promises.

*Dom Ithmael.* Yes, but they have their earnest in great performances. Christianity,—with its precursors, Judaism, Roman Law, and Greek Philosophy,—is the one institution that has done much, and to this day continues to do much, for the moral improvement of mankind. To my mind, the most telling argument against Christianity—and of course there are arguments against the best of causes, British rule in India being no exception—the most telling of anti-Christian arguments, I say, is that Christianity is too great and too good for man ; that it holds before him a standard of purity whereof he is perpetually falling short ; that it throws him into a communion with the Infinite which he is capable of maintaining only for a few brief intervals ; that, clothing him in baptismal grace, it puts a king's robe on a peasant working in the mire of the fields ; that, earthly and all imperfect as he is, it puts within his near reach a glory, which *it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive* (1 Cor. ii. 9). My dear sir, if you are ἐραστής τῶν μεγάλων, one in love with big things, cling fast to your Christianity. Without the gospel and the promises of Christ, human life is pettiness and nastiness, and ends in a covered dunghill,—unless you prefer cremation.

*Mr. Prince.* Let us abandon that hut, and revert to the grand construction of nature, the starry heavens. I see you have a model there. The earth appears as a pin-head, and its orbit about the round of a sixpence. Does not that tell of the nothingness of man, and the insignificance of his doings in the eyes of any intelligent Author of the Universe? *And thinkest thou meet to open thine eyes upon such a one, and to bring him before thee unto judgment?* (Job xiv. 3.)

*Dom Ithmael.* Physical science, which starts that difficulty, also removes it. There are molecular as well as sidereal wonders. The atom is scarcely less wonderful than the sun. Nothing is too great for the Intelligence at the back of nature, and nothing is too small for it either. The power that controls an atomic system equally with a constellation, is not to be



supposed to neglect man because man is small. Limited intelligences neglect details ; that is an economy which such an intelligence is obliged to practise ; but nature does not neglect them, nor that Intelligence which co-exists with all nature and transcends it all. Then, as I have said before, man is mind ; and mind is better than many cubic miles of nebula. This carries my thoughts back to two Christian doctrines which seem greatly in point here, the doctrine of angels, and the doctrine of immortal disembodied human souls.

*Mr. Prince.* Pardon my interrupting you. My question is rather off the point ; but, as you have mentioned angels, I should like to ask your opinion about the interference of angels in our sensible world. Newman, you know, believed in it strongly, at least in his early life. Yet now it is accounted terribly unscientific.

*Dom Ithmael.* It would be unscientific to substitute for the uniformities of nature any capricious guidance of angels. But so long as the guidance is steady and uniform, I do not see why the physicist should complain, if I chose to ascribe the regularity of the motions of the heavens to the sedulous and faithful ministry of angels. The law of gravitation in physical science is merely a convenient formula for registering and predicting phenomena of motion. What does it matter to the astronomer whether the sun and planets pull at one another, or whether an angel moves them regularly in an orbit dynamically determinable in terms of centripetal force and tangential velocity ? To the physicist, I say, this does not matter : but to the metaphysician it matters a great deal : for the metaphysician will have it that *esse est posse agere*, to have substantial being is to be able to act according to that being : a wholly passive material body would not be a substance at all. On these metaphysical considerations I should unhesitatingly reject the hypothesis of the heavenly bodies being passive lumps wheeled about by angels. Your question, however, does not refer to the ordinary workings of nature, but to occasional interference of angels with those workings.

*Mr. Prince.* That is just it. You remember Addison's famous simile about Marlborough :

*So when an angel by divine command—*

I forget how it goes on, but it is about an angel stirring up a storm. To be able to do that is to be able also, with like divine command or permission, to allay a tempest. Think you, can a meteorologist possibly admit that ?

*Dom Ithmael.* There is no reason why he should not admit it, if he admits the existence of angels at all. An angel *ex hypothesi* is a being far superior in power to man. In Italy men claim to be able to dissipate hail-storms, or change them into rain-storms, by firing cannon ; so they save their glass-houses and their vines. And are our meteorological observations so exact and adequate as to enable us with scientific confidence to proclaim that, man excepted, no other volitional power has ever anything whatsoever to say to the course of the weather ?

*Mr. Prince.* No man who has ever worked in an observatory would venture to say so.

*Dom Ithmael.* So then science, as distinguished from sophistry, does not exclude prayers for rain ?

*Mr. Prince.* No, it does not.

*Dom Ithmael (opening a book).* " Would you think of praying that air might not rush into vacuums ? Then why should you ask God to do something with the atmosphere of the whole globe, which you admit would be absurd with regard to that exhausted receiver ? "

*Mr. Prince.* But I see a man presiding over that exhausted receiver, taking out the stopper or keeping it in at his pleasure ; and so regulating the flow of air without prejudice to the laws of atmospheric pressure. What man can do, God and His angels can do on a larger scale ; always supposing that there is a personal God, which is presupposed in prayers for rain and in all other prayers of petition.

*Dom Ithmael.* And what has physical science to say to the question of a personal God?

*Mr. Prince.* Nothing for it, and nothing against it. The question is beyond the compass of physical science.

*Dom Ithmael.* At the same time you would not deny that a competent knowledge of physics is in these days a most necessary preliminary, or adjunct, to the study of that science which does deal with the question, namely, metaphysics.

*Mr. Prince.* Not only do I not deny it, but I should wish to embody it in a canon of neo-scholasticism, *nemo metaphysicus qui non prius physicus*.

*Dom Ithmael.* Bravo! But we have been wandering. Before we got into this digression I was thinking of the vast starry heavens, not as engaging the causative power of angels, but as matter of the study and contemplation of angels. And with the angels I would reckon *the spirits of the just made perfect* (Heb. xii. 23), who, we are told, are *equal to the angels* (ισάγγελοι, Luke xx. 36). Our discussion is not a general one on the truth of Christianity; we are dealing with one particular objection, that Christianity cannot be true because its scheme and vista of things is so petty as compared with the majesty of the universe. Is the astronomy of spectroscope and sensitive plate inimical to the reign of Christ? Does the Nicene Creed postulate the Ptolemaic box of concentric spheres, with the *primum mobile* and the empyrean heaven? Or shall we not rather thank Copernicus for ridding us of the apprehension (mentioned by St. Thomas, *Contra Gentiles*, IV, 87), of the flight of risen bodies to heaven at the last day being barred by the solid crystal of the spheres, *materia coeli durissima et firmissima*, as one old divine calls it?

*Mr. Prince.* It cannot be denied that modern science has delivered the theologian from many meticulous fears, and given him more of a free hand than he had before.

*Dom Ithmael.* The sum of what I want to say is this. Over and above the infinity of God Himself, the vision of whom

forms the essential happiness of the Blessed, accessory matter for their contemplation is provided in a universe, immense in extent, manifold in content, and elaborate in detail, which will serve those who already see God for a further illustration of His majesty and magnificence. This the Blessed see, and we hope for. What then of him who, in the name of science and the great cosmos, rejects the Christian scheme of life, crying as the Athenians cried over the lamb offered at the feast of the Apaturia, μέλον, μέλον, "too small," "too small"?

*Mr. Prince.* It is not Christianity that is too small, but that man's understanding.

## CONVERSATION II

### ILLOGICAL POSTULATES

*Mr. Perkins.* You must know that in my early days I studied for the Church. I completed a two years' course of philosophy in Latin, and gave up at the end of one year and a half of scholastic divinity. Those three or four years have furnished the reflections of my leisure hours ever since; and my reflections are carrying me continually nearer to the conclusion that intellectualism is fatal to Christianity and to Christian theism. Christianity stands upon practical postulates, which human nature, to be sure, as a whole requires, but which sheer intellect must not be trusted to inspect and report upon.\* You remember Newman's phrase, "the all-corroding, all-dissolving scepticism of the intellect in religious matters."

*Dom Daniel.* Yes, it occurs in the fifth chapter of his *Apologia*. I am glad to think that you know that chapter, and that I may presuppose it throughout our conversation.

*Mr. Perkins.* We began our course bravely as intellectualists. We took for our criterion of truth "evidence," that standard of *ἐνάργεια* which the Stoics of old flaunted in face of the Academics. We bulked the thing out in the phrase, *rerum evidentia menti innotescens*, which I venture to translate "the plainness of facts staring in upon the knowing mind." By the by, I should like to know how the Procession of the Holy Ghost does that.

\* No Catholic theologian would subscribe this confession. It is a piece of pragmatism, and goes with the pragmatism that is cast out presently. Christianity, like every other system, has what Newman calls its "first principles." There are true and there are false principles. For a list of false principles, inconsistent with Christianity, see *Grammar of Assent*, p. 416, ed. 1909. The intellectualism that on principle refuses all deference to authority in matters of belief, is fatal to Christianity.—EDITOR.



*Dom Daniel.* Go on ; we will come to that point presently.

*Mr. Perkins.* But our intellectualism was shortlived. It was struck down by the first opponents that it encountered, idealism and scepticism. We admitted that a thorough-paced sceptic could not be directly refuted, could not be argued with nor argue : but such a dead-lock our soul abhorred, therefore we would not be sceptics. In the argument against idealism a thorough idealist appeared about as invulnerable as a thorough sceptic : therefore we pronounced that idealism led to scepticism ; and we banned them both together in one common abomination, not so much because we had refuted their arguments as because we could not stomach their conclusions. We laid it down as a postulate, that the human mind is capable of attaining to truth, objective truth. Unless that were granted to us, we threatened to go on strike ; we would close our school and have no more to do with philosophy. I dare say we were right : only we were finding our salvation in pragmatism. Our very criterion of truth had to be secured pragmatically : we made a postulate that there was such a thing as *rerum evidentia menti innotescens* : we craved as men in need of it to be allowed to hold it. Then in theology—

*Dom Daniel.* Permit me. I happen to have been writing something which enables me probably to forecast your drift. Here it is : “ Faith is not divorced from evidence. Usually, there is no intrinsic evidence of the mystery in itself, which is the object of faith : but there is never lacking intrinsic evidence of the credibility of the revelation. This evidence of credibility, which waits upon faith, is of two kinds, natural and supernatural. The natural is merely rational : the supernatural is borne out by grace. The natural, or rational, evidence of the credibility of the Christian revelation is sufficient, under favourable conditions, for a prudent man thereupon to make up his mind to accept Christianity. It is enough to enable him to make up his mind : it is not enough to make up his mind for him and necessarily to determine his assent. Take this equation :

$$5a + 9b - 4 = 0$$

where  $a$  is  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $b$  is  $\frac{1}{3}$ . Given such values, assent to the proportion is irresistible for anyone who understands it. The evidence of the credibility of the Christian revelation is not so irresistible: the matter is not so simple, not so clear. Many have the evidence proposed to them, and stand out against it. Were there no further evidence than this natural evidence, the assent of faith could never be so strong as it is. Faith would be a sort of natural prudence, and could be in reason no stronger than the prudential considerations that motivated it. The certainty of faith would be then a moral certainty, no more. But faith is a supernatural act, a work of grace. The believer hears the voice of God in his soul, not instructing him, but moving him to believe the instruction given in Church doctrine. When he believes, he attains to a certitude higher than is afforded by any natural arguments that may influence his belief. What he believes becomes to him evidently credible with an evidence that is natural, in so far as it is declared by mere reason, but supernatural inasmuch as it is constituted by the voice of God speaking directly, not to his senses, but to his innermost understanding and will. And on this supernatural evidence, on this divine assurance (*πληροφορία πίστεως*, Heb. x. 22: cf. Rom. iv. 21: Col. ii. 2) he rests far more than on any philosophical or critical reasoning, for your ordinary believer has no time for philosophy and a poor eye for criticism." Thus far I had written yesterday. It may go some way to answer your allegation that theological faith, *e.g.*, in the Procession of the Holy Ghost, is a breaking away from that standard of logicians, *rerum evidentia menti innotescens*.

*Mr. Perkins.* It is an answer, but do not think me rude if I say that it reminds me of the plumber who broke two panes of glass for one that he mended.

*Dom Daniel.* Exactly what every good answer does: you raise two difficulties in explaining one. You analyse the orbit of the earth, and then are called upon to say what is gravitation and why the primitive nebula rotated. You describe the composition of the atom, and are called to account about electrons.

*Mr. Perkins.* Well, I will treat you only to one difficulty of the many that your answer suggests. You seem to have come back in the last resort to the private inspiration of the sixteenth-century reformer and of the modern theosophist. As you have read to me, allow me to return the compliment. This is a passage from a pamphlet sent me the other day: "But you must not build the Church of Christ on antiquarian research, nor on the Higher Criticism, nor on any question of the value of a manuscript: you must build Christ's Church on the living Christ, and not on the dead manuscripts, otherwise your Church will crumble before the assaults of scholars and antiquarians. You should not live in continual fear lest one man should take away from you this doctrine, and another man that, lest this scholar should deprive you of one belief, and another scholar of another. Nay! Those things may have their place and uses; and the greatest use of criticism seems to me to be, not that it establishes the facts of history, because these facts of history are not very important things, but that it drives the devout heart back on its own experience, on the living experience of a living Christ, which is the basis of all true religion. For religion is not based on mouldy manuscripts, nor on worm-eaten books: it does not find its sanction in the authority of Councils, nor in the statements of tradition. It comes from human experience, from the evolving relation of the human soul with God. And Christ is driving His Church back upon that, because it has been built on the shifting sand of history instead of upon the rock of human experience." (*Is Theosophy Anti-Christian?* An explanation addressed to the Bishop of London, by Annie Besant, 1894.) Do you agree?

*Dom Daniel.* No, not I. Christianity is a religion of historical fact: the life, death, and resurrection of Christ are historical facts: now we cannot have personal experience of events that happened ere we were born. How then do we know those facts? They are knowable, to a certain extent, by the ordinary methods of historical research, just as the history of Augustus Caesar is knowable. Usually, however, the Christian takes them on the word of the Church: he learns

them in the Church's catechism, or he has read the Bible which the Church places in his hands. How then does he know the competence of the Church to teach him ?

*Mr. Perkins.* A very pretty question : what is your answer ?

*Dom Daniel.* The average Catholic does not trouble himself with the question. It is like the question that vexes young logicians, but not ordinary men, as to how we know that life is not a dream and the realities of life mere illusions. For neither question is he ready with a scientific answer. He has always been a Catholic, he says : from his childhood he has counted it a sin to doubt of the Church's authority over him. On reflection he will further tell you that he is happy in his Christianity, much happier than the creedless men, his neighbours : that whatever is best about him has been cast and modelled according to the Church's system : that for him to rebel against the Catholic Church would be to banish God and goodness from his heart, it would be a sort of moral suicide.

*Mr. Perkins.* Yes, those I should call my own reasons, and as a practical man they are enough for me.

*Dom Daniel.* The lady whom you have quoted refers to " the Church " without specifying what she understands by the term. If I may take it to mean the Catholic Church, and add that I look to the Catholic Church to teach me the articles of my faith, not to any emotions of my own, heaven-sent or otherwise ; and further that I take sundry " facts of history," e.g., the Crucifixion of my Saviour, to be " very important things," then I say that there is an element in the passage which you have just read with which before now I have expressed my cordial agreement.\* My faith in the Church

\* " If you want to know Christ there is no need of your turning antiquarian. Go to the Church of to-day ; she represents Him and testifies to Him. You do not go to the Record Office to look for the British Government. Hence we must protest against such a view of Christianity as is embodied in the following sentence : ' Christianity is and always will remain a great literary and historical problem, a question of documents and testimony.' "—*Oxford and Cambridge Conferences*, 1897-9, pp. 406-7.



"is not based on mouldy manuscripts nor on worm-eaten books": it comes of my being a member of the Church of this present day, and living the life of faith which she lives. The Church is to me her own evidence: she is a self-luminous body: *sua ipsa luce se signat*, as St. Ambrose (*lib. 2 in Luc., II*) says of our Lord on earth. For miracles, her very existence is a standing miracle. I am not like people on the East Coast of England in the years 1914-18, living in fear night and day of "the latest thing from Germany," lest one Herr Professor should rob me of the Virgin Birth, another of the Ascension. When I have time, as a mere matter of erudition or professional duty, but by no means for the recovery of my faith, I look up this latest thing, often to find it neither conclusive nor new. Sometimes I do discern about it a difficulty for the nonce beyond my solution. Then I rest on the faith of my baptism; and believe that there is an answer somewhere beyond my ken. Later on I find the answer, or haply I do not. But, answer or no answer, my faith in the Church is unshaken. At Oxford I learnt no better lesson than this, that there is a great deal to say against every truth; and the deeper and more precious the truth, the more it is assailable: but the truth remains true "for a' that"; and he is a fool who shifts his intellectual course for every wind of opposition. Truth comes out under manifold aspects under manifold attacks: and it is not swept away, but expanded by contradiction; at the same time we must not be scandalised at it, nor forsake it, if to our gaze for a while it is overclouded.

*Mr. Perkins.* You have repelled my threatened inroad into theology, but now back to pragmatism. And yet I did not come here to talk about pragmatism either, but about certain pragmatical postulates of Free Will, of Immortality, and of Theism. There is a school at home which teaches that while all these three things are demonstrable absurdities, yet we must cry them up, and get ourselves and others to believe in them, because, without such beliefs, *Ichabod*,—the glory of our race is departed, and life is no longer worth living.

*Dom Daniel.* I see, we must tell what Plato calls a γενναῖον



ψεύδος, and plant this "noble lie" not only in the hearts of others, where Plato thinks it may work well ὡς ἐν φαρμάκον εἶδεν, but even in our own hearts, so as to beget there what Plato sovereignly abhorred, "the lie in the soul."\* Can you attach any weight to a philosophy which is reduced to such shifts as these?

*Mr. Perkins.* The school I refer to, having undermined all the ground in their own vicinity, have gone to look for a standpoint within pragmatist lines. Seeing they have taken refuge there, shall we make some reconnaissance of the pragmatist position?

*Dom Daniel.* With all my heart, provided it be a reconnaissance only, and that we do not venture on a pitched battle with the whole array of pragmatists. To the pragmatist, then, that belief alone is true which is found to be permanently useful. But "useful" is a relative term. A thing is useful to some end. What end does the pragmatist propose as the goal of all utility and consummation of all truth? A private or a public end? Pleasure? Then what quality of pleasure? Or does he admit no difference of quality in pleasure? Does he measure pleasures by their intensity alone? Or, if that be bestial hedonism, shall we rather say that that is true, which is useful to give pleasure to a trained mind? Napoleon had a trained mind: he took his pleasure and found his satisfaction in sanguinary wars in view of a universal empire. Suppose he had been victorious to the end, as with a little more prudence he might have been, and as Alexander actually was: would every belief then have been true that made for the consolidation of Napoleon's empire?

*Mr. Perkins.* A good examination paper for a pragmatist. But they are clever men, and could write for hours in reply. One reply I know that they would make is this: It is no business of ours as pragmatists, they would say, to define the end of life, to tell you what the *summum bonum* is, or to answer the question, "useful for what?" The Platonic account of

\* Plato, *Republic*, II, 382; III, 389 B, 414 B sq.

the *summum bonum* suffices for us. You remember it in the Sixth Republic (*Rep.*, VI, 505): "that which every soul pursues, and for the sake of it does all its acts, divining that the good has some real existence, but quite at a loss and unable to furnish any adequate definition of its essence." They further say that, while utility is the test of truth, it is only a negative test, inasmuch as no proposition that is not useful is true, but there are propositions useful and untrue.

*Dom Daniel.* Stay, let us think that last point out. If utility is only a negative test, where is the positive criterion of truth, the test which all truth will stand and truth alone will stand?

*Mr. Perkins.* Pragmatism, so far as I know, has no such criterion to offer.

*Dom Daniel.* That is unfortunate. The pragmatist might, I think, with advantage refit himself from the utilitarian armoury of Bentham, Paley and Mill. Let him lay hold of the distinction between "general consequences" and "particular," and declare that all those propositions are true, and those propositions alone are true, which are useful "in their general consequences," that is, on the whole and in the long run for the well-being of the human race.

*Mr. Perkins.* I fancy that this distinction is in the pragmatist's mind, even though he does not explicitly show it.

*Dom Daniel.* So the "lying bulletins," as they were called in England, put by the first Napoleon in the *Moniteur*, were not true. They had a certain utility in their particular consequences to Napoleonism, but they were not useful to the human race.

*Mr. Perkins.* Unless Napoleonism was useful to the human race.

*Dom Daniel.* Rather a large question to decide.

*Mr. Perkins.* The pragmatist, perhaps, would say that those bulletins were useful, and therefore true, to any man who

believed them, so long as he found himself helped by believing them.

*Dom Daniel.* He may indeed say so, but then he goes back upon what he had committed himself to before, that utility is but a negative test of truth, and that not every useful proposition is true. Now he affirms that every useful proposition is true to the man who finds it useful, so long as he finds it useful. At that rate, we have as many truths as there are temporary utilities of individuals, warring with one another.

*Mr. Perkins.* Truth torn up like Osiris, and her limbs carried hither and thither,—to borrow the imagery of Milton.

*Dom Daniel.* The pragmatist should be pressed to define whether his standard of the useful refers to temporary or permanent utilities. A standard of temporary utility would involve the breaking up of permanent truth. On the other hand, permanent utility is not a thing so easy to discern. How can I tell what propositions are useful, and what propositions are useless, in view of any permanent good? The proposition that I count useless, and therefore untrue, may bear upon some ultimate good which, in my negligence of final ends, I do not appreciate. I may see no good in the prosecution of physical science except so far as it promises some invention that will augment the material comfort of mankind. Then, on pragmatist grounds, I shall set down all further researches as useless, void of human interest, leading to no truth. But surely I am mistaken there. Knowledge is a good in itself, quite as much of a good, some people will say, as comfort. It is good to know merely for knowing's sake. Are there not infinite details true, which are of no practical concern to man—the niceties of a magpie's plumage, the exact route and time of the migration of swallows, or the structure of a tit's nest? To hold such details for facts, the pragmatist is constrained to enlarge the meaning of "utility" beyond all ordinary parlance. Thus he may say that every statement conforms to his test of utility, and is to be accounted true, in which the philosophic mind can rest with satisfaction. So the philosophic

mind of the ornithologist rests in an accurate description of a tit's nest ; and nothing short of accuracy and adequacy of detail will satisfy him. But "utility" thus transformed is nothing else than our old friend "evidence" in another guise. The human mind has an affinity for truth, and rests with satisfaction in what is evident, *i.e.*, clearly true,—even apart from all question of action.

*Mr. Perkins.* Not quite, I think. The pragmatist will say: "If you take such and such a view of a tit's nest, and are interested in such things, then the next nest you visit, you will not be disappointed in your expectations."

*Dom Daniel.* Yes, and if you write down such and such a formula for the value of  $\pi$ , then the next calculation you make, involving the relation of circumference to diameter, will fit in with other calculations, and you will be pleased with the consistency. Action comes into everything, even the profoundest speculations on the Trinity, if under action you include the scientific labours of the laboratory, the wanderings of the naturalist, the calculations of the mathematician, and the ecstasy of the mystic. There is no special virtue in utility as a test of truth, when utility is thus beaten out to the fineness of gold leaf and wrapped round every conceivable object of thought. You might just as well say "evidence," or "consistency," or "experience," or "the inconceivability of the opposite." The lack of any of these things is disquieting to the inquisitive mind, and the attainment of any of them is satisfactory and "useful."

*Mr. Perkins.* So I perceive. There is nothing new under the sun, not even pragmatism.

*Dom Daniel.* These are difficulties, I will not say fatal objections, to be talked over with the next pragmatist you meet. Still, pragmatism, though it be an error, is at the same time the correction of an error.

*Mr. Perkins.* How so?

*Dom Daniel.* In this way. Philosophers from Plato down-



wards have led us astray by seeking in the abstract science of mathematics the normal type of truth. Truth, as Hegel well says, is concrete, not abstract. It is many-sided. The truth that is most valuable to man, moral, social, and religious truth, appeals to the whole man, to the entirety of human nature ; and not, like the truths of number and dimension, to the intellect only. While Intellect can never be dethroned from the judicial seat—for we should go grievously wrong by making the “ conative faculties,” as they are called, alone our judges,—still neither must these conative faculties be excluded. We must beware of a high and dry intellectualism in practical matters. The truth that claims to rule conduct must be judged, not by mere discernment of intellect, but by the satisfaction which the assumption of it for true and the acting upon it for right affords to rational will and desire.

*Mr. Perkins.* In fact, by experience. We accept many facts in experience, the exact *rationale* of which our intellect cannot gauge.

*Dom Daniel.* Just so. But had we not better revert to those postulates of Free Will, Immortality, and Theism, in which I think you are mainly interested,—three demonstrated absurdities, were they not?—which nevertheless the practical Reason claims to hold in spite of the speculative Intellect ?

*Mr. Perkins.* I cannot return to England till that theme is exhausted.

*Dom Daniel.* Then I am afraid you will have to stay in India, for to exhaust such a triple theme we should have to know all that man is and all that God is. But, I take it, you do not ask me to evince that man’s will is free and his soul immortal, and that there is a God, but rather to discuss the value of the philosophic method (I speak not now of pragmatism) which first tears a proposition to tatters, and then begs leave to pick it up, piece it together again, and hold it fast, because it is such a good proposition, so elevating, indeed so necessary to human life. Lady Burton used to say that your Syrian is the prince of beggars : he will ask you for articles in your room of the



value of fifty pounds ; and will tell you that these high demands on your bounty are a proof how much he loves you. If we are to beg, I propose begging with Syrian audacity. I postulate the entire system of the Catholic Church, Trent and Vatican included.

*Mr. Perkins.* Can't you get on with less ?

*Dom Daniel.* No, I cannot. As things stand in the world, life without the Catholic Church is to me not worth living ; and the Catholic system, as you know, is one and indivisible. On the other hand, a nebulous theism, a vague presentation of some " essence of beauty, shining from the liquid melted blue of the skies, or haply in the eyes of a woman," joined to a free will presumed on sufferance, and an immortality the conditions of which are wholly uncertain, make no stable basis of conduct. These postulates are not only illogical in the mouths of them that make them, they are useless, they have no pragmatistical value. Much more entitled to respect for clear downright thinking and practical insight is that school of thought which, once having set aside theism and any life of any world to come, never asks to have them back, but sets itself doggedly to the task of improving the breed of what Hamlet calls that " two-forked animal," man, by the extermination, or anyhow the sterilisation, of all weakling specimens.

*Mr. Perkins.* I have seen some such process advocated in the pages of a philosophical story-teller. The writer has this merit, that having stripped the temple of its ornaments, he is content with the bare walls : he postulates nothing supra-mundane, no curtains or hangings from another world ; man as he comes under the ken of physical science is to him all man. This school, if I am not mistaken, will prove the ultimate rival to Christianity.

*Dom Daniel.* I think so too. Would it not be wiser, instead of postulating positions which one claims to have proved untenable, to postulate, or assume for a season, some want of cogency in one's own previous argumentation : to do, in fact, as the schoolboy does, when the answer which he has

worked out to a sum does not square with the answer in the book, or with the visible object in nature,—suppose himself wrong and work the thing out over again? May we not hold that it is more likely for a brilliant writer to be out in his reckoning than for a position essential to the well-being of humanity to be philosophically absurd. Life is not built on absurdities. Pragmatism must not be pushed too far: still there is a connection between utility and truth. *Piety is profitable in all respects, having the promise of this present life and of the life to come* (1 Tim. iv. 8).



## CONVERSATION III

### CREATION AND ITS ALTERNATIVE, PANTHEISM

*Mr. St. Germaine.* My coming here on this intellectual quest is the result of a Spiritual Retreat that I made two months ago. As you are aware, the first meditation in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola opens with the words, "Man was created." In the silence of retreat, probing the great facts of religion to the bottom, it soon struck me that every practical conclusion to which the Exercises lead,—and they do lead to so many as very much to amaze an ordinary man of the world,—every one of these practical conclusions rests on this position, that man is a creature, made and continually kept out of nothingness by the mere free will of God, and therefore entirely dependent upon Him, and bound to conform himself in all things, not to any measure of his own private convenience, but to the purpose and good pleasure of his Creator.

*Dom Augustine.* I am glad you hit the mark of the *Spiritual Exercises* so exactly.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* But when I tried to think out the process of creation, I experienced a difficulty greater than I had anticipated, indeed, quite new to me. I am aware of the ordinary arguments against pantheism, and am not insensible to their value. But I must say, the pantheistic origin of all things seemed to me more thinkable than the theistic. I could better conceive, so I thought, an Infinite Potential continually becoming actual in finite actualities, which is the hypothesis of pantheism, than an Infinite Actual virtually

containing all finite actualities, which is the theistic position. I put this difficulty before Padre Onufrio, who was giving me my retreat, and he advised me, seeing that the study of philosophy and the making of the Spiritual Exercises were two incompatible occupations, to take theism and creation for the present on faith, and meditate their logical consequences, reserving the philosophical inquiry for some future occasion.

*Dom Augustine.* Sage old Padre Onufrio !

*Mr. St. Germaine.* At the same time he told me of your Abbey and its purpose, and suggested a visit to Thall Ghât as a goal for my next Long Vacation rambles.

*Dom Augustine.* There I doubt if Padre Onufrio was quite so wise. But we will do our best to satisfy you, having come thus far to see us.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* Perhaps I had better rehearse to you my confession of faith ; then we will consider its intellectual difficulties. On the faith, then, of a Christian man I hold that while God is necessary to the universe, the universe is not necessary to God. God is no part of the universe, but stands infinitely above it, wholly and in every sense distinct from it. We cannot admit with Schelling any higher point of convergence in which God and the universe meet as one. God alone is " necessary " being, inasmuch as He alone is and absolutely must be, *quand même*, on any hypothesis you choose to frame. The universe is " contingent " being : it is, but might not have been, and at any instant it would drop out of existence, were God to cease to will to continue it ; and this volition of the existence and continuation of the universe is in God a perfectly free act. He is not determined by the constitution of His nature to will anything beyond Himself; and the universe is beyond God ; it is not indeed beyond His control, but inasmuch as it formally and explicitly exists, it is beyond the actual content of the divine being. The universe, therefore, is not made up of the Thoughts of God : it is no process of divine meditation unfolding itself in logical sequence. God's Thoughts are God Himself, eternal and necessary. Strictly, God has but one



Thought, the Thought of Himself. In thinking of Himself He thinks of all being that is, and of all that ever possibly could be; for God is at once the supreme actuality and the pattern of the whole ideal and possible order. He is one actually, but virtually manifold, as His nature may be imitated outside Himself in endless partial and defective ways. Beyond thinking, as I have said, He further wills whatever He wishes to draw out of possibility into actual existence. He thinks of all things possible; and wills some finite number of them actually to be, the number of things that make up the universe. The former is a necessary act, the latter, considered in its term, is a free act.

*Dom Augustine.* You are quite orthodox: not is it anything against orthodoxy to discuss difficulties; so into the difficulties, if you please, we will go.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* My difficulty is in combining these two propositions: (a) No creature can exist apart from God continually thinking of it, and willing its existence; (b) Creatures have their own existence distinct from that of the Creator. I could hold either of these positions singly; but the holding of them both together baffles my thinking faculty. I can take their conjunction only on faith, as a mystery to me insoluble, but revealed to the Church.

*Dom Augustine.* Let us propose to ourselves the first position unchecked by the second; and then the second regardless of the first.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* With all my heart. Allow that creatures are the thoughts of God, and that God is still in some way the master of His own thoughts, then you have it that God continually thinks of and wills everything that exists; and conversely, everything that exists is a divine idea and volition. The dependence of the universe on God is thus perfectly maintained: God is all that is, and, if God were not, nothing would be. But it is maintained by merging the universe in the Deity.

*Dom Augustine.* Yes, you win one point of orthodoxy by

the sacrifice of another,—a dear bargain. You obliterate the physical distinction between God and created Nature, and so accept pantheism.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* On the other hand, coming to position (b), the dualism of Plato's *Timæus*, and subsequently of the Manicheans, yields us a world of brute chaotic matter physically distinct from God, and not created by Him. God is not all that is,—thus we escape pantheism,—but neither is He the maker of the material universe, only its manager and reformer. We have a Demiurge, but not a Creator.

*Dom Augustine.* I see: the old story of Scylla and Charybdis. You escape pantheism by turning Manichee.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* That I have no mind to do. No Manichee and no Materialist for me. Though far from agreeing with Kant, I must do the philosopher of Königsberg the justice to say that, not so much perhaps by his arguments as by the drift of his thought, he indisposes the student for materialism, and sets him musing on the necessary superintendence of some Mind over all matter.

*Dom Augustine.* At Oxford I used to think that if the prevalent Kantism were a disease, and such I took it to be, it at any rate drove away all other diseases, and took entire possession of your system, as gout is said to do; an effect which Thucydides, I remember, ascribes also to the plague at Athens. Kantism was prophylactic against Herbert Spencer. It “cleared the High” of nebulae rotating, and matter spontaneously generating, and living creatures crushing one another, with the immediate intent of their own individual greed, but ultimately, it appears, for the elevation of the species, all without any thinking mind to start them. The spiritual sense of Oxford was averse to such *βαναυσία*.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* The edifice of vulgar profanity and crude materialism, that has been decorated with Darwin's name, has no attraction for me. But pantheism is another thing. You will confess, will you not, that if all notion of creation were shown to be entirely chimerical and intrinsically

absurd, the only alternative that could commend itself to a philosophic mind would be pantheism ?

*Dom Augustine.* I willingly allow that, with one *caveat*, that a notion shown to be vague and inadequate is not thereby condemned as "entirely chimerical and intrinsically absurd." Else what becomes of Time and Space ?

*Mr. St. Germaine.* I allow the *caveat*. What I want you now to do for me is to furnish any fact in human experience which will bear, I do not say any generic resemblance to the creative act, for that, I know, is impossible, but at least some tangible analogy.

*Dom Augustine.* *Creare*, as this Latin dictionary informs me, means "to procreate, or beget"; also "to appoint," *e.g.*, *creare dictatorem*.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* "Appoint" won't do: you can't appoint out of nothing: you can't appoint a blank nonentity colonel of a regiment.

*Dom Augustine.* I thought such appointments had been made ere now, judging by the talk of officers who sometimes visit us at Thall Ghât. No doubt they spoke of prehistoric times, to the study of which they had devoted their leisure. But how about the former sense of "procreation or generation" ?

*Mr. St. Germaine.* No, procreation throws no light on creation: for the offspring procreated, generated, or begotten, is of the same specific nature as its parents: but Creator and creature are not of one species.

*Dom Augustine.* Your answer is perfect, and leaves nothing more to say on that score. But why did I not at once propose the analogy usually alleged? Think of perception; understand sensory perceptions, and you understand creation: the two processes march together.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* Thank you. Understand one mystery, and you may understand another. Or is not perception a

mystery? Have not philosophers wrangled about it ever since the days of Berkeley? And the ghost of Berkeley, I fear, will forever walk, striking dismay and arousing contention in our philosophic halls.

*Dom Augustine.* Happily we need not measure swords, or pastoral staves, with the Bishop of Cloyne. Berkeley is right or Berkeley is wrong. If he is right, perception affords no analogy to creation. According to Berkeley, nothing exists in the order of created things but percipient minds. Creation, modelled on that view of perception, would imply that creatures are mere modes of Divinity.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* Which is pantheism. Universally, idealism in psychology means pantheism in theology. Berkeley, it is true, was no pantheist, but then he did not push his conclusions: others did that for him. If ultimately and in the last resort I am not distinct from the material object that I perceive, then the inference is ready that, ultimately and in the last resort, God is not distinct from the world.

*Dom Augustine.* But how if Berkeley be wrong, and the whole tribe of idealists that followed him?

*Mr. St. Germaine.* The rejection of idealism means that the perceived thing is a thing, physically distinct from the act of perceiving it, and existing in itself whether you perceive it or not.

*Dom Augustine.* Yes, and what does that broad gulf between αἰσθησις and αἰσθητόν avail for our purpose?

*Mr. St. Germaine.* On the side of αἰσθησις or the percipient act, it avails us nothing. For the act is an act of the percipient mind, and part of that mind, as accident is part of substance. You are thrown upon pantheism again, if you push that side of the analogy.

*Dom Augustine.* Fall back upon the αἰσθητόν, the thing perceived.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* Which we suppose now to be physically



distinct from the perceiving mind and the percipient act ; *e.g.*, yon distant peak is physically other than me. That won't help us either : for it would present to us a world existing apart from the thought and supervision of God. Monism in psychology means pantheism, and dualism makes matter independent of mind, which is materialism.

*Dom Augustine.* Then we must break out of the charmed circle, and boldly proclaim that there is no analogy between our sensory perception of a material universe and the creative act whereby God has made and sustains a world physically distinct from Himself.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* Make proclamation accordingly.

*Dom Augustine.* But now I bethink me of an obvious analogy which the books lay down between any ordinary work of man's hands and God's work of creation. God makes substances out of nothing, and man makes accidents, not exactly out of nothing, but in a substance where those accidents were not before, that is, as the schoolmen say, *non ex nihilo subjecti sed ex nihilo accidentis*. The painter induces the accidental form of a portrait upon a canvas that had it not before.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* The analogy is good, so far as it goes. But it stops short in this, that the accidental change which man induces upon matter endures after he has taken his hand away, after he is gone, after he is dead ; whereas the creature never can be for an instant but under the action of God.

*Dom Augustine.* We are on a fool's errand ; nowhere shall we find an instance of man, or any created agent, producing a real effect outside himself which shall depend on him for its continued existence. Yet, on reflection, I am not so sure of that. What do you think of a man making a speech ?

*Mr. St. Germaine.* Ha ! a capital example ! I wonder I had not thought of that before.

*Dom Augustine.* The speech,—and say the same of a song, or music that a man plays,—is something objective, projected outside of speaker, singer, or player ; stopping when he ceases



to act ; modified at his choice ; made, we may say, out of zero of sound, which is called silence (though of course requiring the pre-existence of air) ; in fact, analogously, a veritable creature of man. We are safe in laying it down that as man makes speech or music out of silence ; and this speech or music of his is distinct from him, objective and external to him, and yet withal dependent on him, on his thought, will, and power for its existence every moment ; so has God created out of nothing a world which is not God, and yet could not be for a moment without God's thought, will, and care for it. The world is God's creature ; and, analogously, speech or music is of man's creation. Mind, this is an analogy, no more.

*Mr. St. Germaine.* I am satisfied. There is in the everyday experience of human life something analogous to creation. Creation, therefore, is not wholly unthinkable.

## CONVERSATION IV

### THE OBSCURITY OF FAITH

*Mr. Eversley.* I had thought that Christianity was a rational system, partly historical (inclusive of revelation as an historical fact), partly philosophical ; that it was established by philosophical argument and historical research ; proved to the hilt, so as to be irresistibly cogent to every well-informed, unprejudiced, and intelligent mind ; that to every objection there was an answer pat, giving that difficulty its quietus ; that the Christian system need only to be understood to be embraced ; that increase of knowledge must give us increase of strength ; that every advance of philosophy, science, history, archæology, must further our cause : in a word, that Christianity was Intellectualism, and had nothing to fear but obscurantism, ignorance, and misrepresentation.

*Dom Theodoret.* There is nothing surprising in that : you have lived for some years in a state of mind in which many good Catholics spend their whole lifetime,—what Newman calls “ invincible knowledge.”

*Mr. Eversley.* But I have come out of it ; and now Christianity to me bristles with difficulties, and in recurring hours the infidel objection is to my mind far more telling than the reply of the orthodox champion : indeed, few of our champions of orthodoxy seem to have eyes to see the difficulties that, in present times, press on men’s minds most : we go on fiddling while Rome is burning. *Ye see the cloud rising from the west, and ye say, Rain is coming ; when the south wind blows ye say, There will be heat : how is it that ye discern not this present season ?* (Luke xii. 54-6.)

*Dom Theodoret.* Let me ask you to read a few more texts of the New Testament, and in their light consider whether Christianity was originally put forth as an intellectual system, a "critique," a philosophy; whether Christ and His apostles leant mainly upon intellect; whether they undertook to bear down reason and compel assent with the strength of an Aristotelian ἀπόδειξις, or demonstration, such as is possible in the exact sciences, and nowhere else. I find the acceptance of the Christian creed spoken of as a gift of God.

*Mr. Eversley.* Success in the Final Honours School of *Litt. Hum.* at Oxford is a gift of God.

*Dom Theodoret.* But not the special gift spoken of in these texts. *No man can come to me unless the Father who hath sent me draw him. It is written in the prophets: And they shall be all taught of God* (John vi. 44, 45). *Ye have an unction* (χρίσμα, a participation in the anointed χριστός) *from the Holy One, and know all things* (that you hold by faith. 1 John ii. 20). *The Lord added daily to the Church them that were in the way of being saved* (τοὺς σωζομένους, those rescued. Acts ii. 47). *They believed, as many as were ordained to life everlasting* (Acts xiii. 48, cf. Rom. ix. 16, 27). Or would anyone write of an Oxford First Class in the following terms? *Not in the wisdom of word, that the cross of Christ might not be made void: for it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and confound the shrewdness of the shrewd* (1 Cor. i. 17, 19). *Putting down reasonings, and every height that is set up against the knowledge of God, and bringing every device of intellect* (νόημα) *into captivity unto the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor. x. 5, 6). *See that none overpower you by philosophy and empty deceit* (Col. ii. 8).

*Mr. Eversley.* Nay, I think that last advice peculiarly apposite for the Oxford Schools. I would write it over the door. But captivity is repugnant to the very notion of intellect. Intellect is naught, unless it be free.

*Dom Theodoret.* Yes, intellect *qua* intellect, αὐτὸς ὁ νοῦς, that is, perfect intellect, but not a baby mind. Now Christianity assumes, and has assumed from the first, that the intellect

of the wisest of us is in a very babyish condition as regards the truths that make for the happiness of the life to come. The lesson of the New Testament, in this resembling the lesson taught by Socrates, is that we should own our babyish ignorance; and, further, what Socrates could not do, it shows us the Guide by whom we are to be instructed and led. *I am the way and the truth: Suffer the little children to come to me: amen I say unto you, whoever receiveth not the Kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it.* (John xiv. 6; Luke xviii. 16, 17.)

*Mr. Eversley.* I understand you to say that faith is a divine gift, to be received with humility, and clung to tenaciously, all arguments to the contrary notwithstanding.

*Dom Theodoret.* Yes, that is the essential notion of faith. The assent of faith is not the acceptance of a reasoned conclusion. It is not irrational,—still, it is a leap beyond reason: it is, as St. John Chrysostom (on 1 Cor. i. 22) describes it, “a laying aside of reasonings and submission of oneself to the Master.” As the diver leaps from land into water, so the believer leaps from arguments into the region of trust and submission. The whole man leaps, not the bodily act of worship or verbal confession only, but the inward assent. And as a man walks to the shore, but, coming to the margin of the lake, he throws himself headlong and swims, so do reasonings conduct towards the faith one who as yet has not faith; but they never make him believe as a faithful Christian: that he can do only of his own good will, prompted by divine grace.

*Mr. Eversley.* I see, reasonings are useful to one who has not the faith,—but not to one who has it.

*Dom Theodoret.* I should not say that: but that they are more useful to the former than to the latter; also, that they are necessary to the former,—not to the latter. *The Jews ask for signs and the Greeks look for wisdom* (1 Cor. i. 22); *Christ crucified* is enough for us (*ib.*, 23; Matt. xii. 38-40). Miracles are a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers (1 Cor. xiv. 22); *i.e.*, they are rather for the one than for the other: so we want

*wisdom, i.e.,* arguments of reason, to meet the *Greeks*, or cultivated pagans of our age, rather for their benefit than for our own.

*Mr. Eversley.* That brings me to my point and purpose of my coming here. Do you undertake to prove to an outsider, for a dead certainty, the truth of the system of doctrine taught as of faith by the Catholic Church?

*Dom Theodoret.* It depends what you mean by a "dead certainty." If you mean the certainty that is born of irrefragable evidence, such as none but an idiot can possibly reject, certainty of that stamp is not procurable in such concrete matter. Let me read you Cardinal Newman's words: "The fact of revelation is in itself demonstrably true; but it is not, therefore, true irresistibly: else, how come it to be resisted? . . . I am suspicious then of scientific demonstration in a question of concrete fact" (*Grammar of Assent*, ch. x, §2). The only certainty which any apologist of Christianity can offer as producible by his arguments is that "moral certainty," as it is called, which excludes prudent doubt; a man may hear the arguments and still doubt the conclusion, but he does not doubt wisely.

*Mr. Eversley.* Can the moral certainty, as you would call it, of the justice of the claims of the Catholic Church be brought home to every mind?

*Dom Theodoret.* Speculatively, yes; practically, no. I mean it can be brought home to the normal mind; but how few minds are normal! Preoccupation, ignorance, prejudice, everywhere militate against the revelation of God. The prejudices of the highly educated are the hardest to eradicate. Not only to jewels and banknotes but to intellectual wealth also we may apply the saying: *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!* (Mark x. 23.)

*Mr. Eversley.* And do you condemn to hell all people, forming as they do the vast majority of our countrymen, who are too ignorant, or too much occupied, or too full of erudite prepossessions, to discern the truth of Catholic Christianity?



*Dom Theodoret.* Doing so, I should consider myself guilty of a violation of my Saviour's command, *Judge not, condemn not* (Luke vi. 37). Besides the sinfulness of such a judgment, there is the horror of it. Nothing short of a revelation from God, speaking through His Church,—and such revelation has not been given,—will make me believe that nineteen-twentieths of the men about me are guilty of the sin of rejecting the known truth. God deals with souls individually. Each soul's responsibility for the light given it varies according to the measure of brightness in which the light from heaven visits that soul. And, perhaps, to no two souls is exactly the same measure of brightness given. Some have the full illumination of Catholic truth. To others,—but we are trenching on deep mysteries of Divine Providence and Mercy, and had better make an end with St. Paul's *O altitudo!* And there is variation not only of supernatural light but also of natural opportunities.

*Mr. Eversley.* Still, I consider it a strange thing that Catholic Christianity, being, as you say, proved beyond all possibility of prudent questioning——

*Dom Theodoret.* To a normal mind, with normal preparation.

*Mr. Eversley.* Yes, I mean, to a normal mind, normally prepared. So well proved, I find it a strange thing that Catholic Christianity does not find a wider acceptance among intelligent men. Why is it not taken up like the theory of gravitation, or the undulatory theory of light?

*Dom Theodoret.* Christianity is a deeper and truer thing than any physical theory. A physical theory is no more than a convenient formula for the registration and prediction of phenomena. With a wider knowledge of phenomena, some other formula may be found more convenient; and the previous theory may be discarded. I do not know what men in the year 3000 will say of gravitation; but probably you are aware that some of the best physicists of our time are entertaining doubts of the undulatory theory, and the existence of that intangible fluid, ether, and are reverting to the corpuscular theory of Newton.

*Mr. Eversley.* So I heard in the Presidential Address at the meeting of the British Association at Mukden, in 2015. Still, luminiferous ether and gravitation are widely received in learned circles. Why is not the like welcome extended to Catholic truth, that being, as you say, so much more certain and so much better proved?

*Dom Theodoret.* The Jesuit way of answering a question, I am told, is to interrogate the interrogator. Allow me to be a little Jesuitical, and to ask you: Do men venture life, limb, and happiness on gravitation and luminiferous ether?

*Mr. Eversley.* They certainly venture them on the phenomena of daily experience, which those theories are devised to explain. Driving a motor-car at night, a man relies on the weight of his machine and on the light that he carries. But he does not rely on those scientific explanations. He would feel just as safe with Cartesian vortices and Newton's corpuscular emanations.

*Dom Theodoret.* But Catholic Christianity is not a speculative doctrine, a scientific curiosity, a theme of academical dispute. It is fearfully practical, earnest, instant even to importunity. It claims sovereign guidance over consciences; it lays down the final goal and last end of life; it brings to bear upon temporal motives the mighty perturbing force of eternity. Shrewd men have said to one meditating conversion: "Don't you turn Catholic if you don't want to be governed." A man may well be slow of assent to a system which offers to rule his life. He may shrink from buying the field with the jewel in it, when he will have to sell all that he has to find the purchase-money (Matt. xiii. 44). It is a cheap thing enough to assent to a physical theory.

*Mr. Eversley.* You said that arguments, like miracles, are for the benefit of unbelievers rather than of believers. It has often struck me how much stronger the faith of Catholics is than any arguments that they can allege in support of it, and how little they trouble themselves about arguments. Faith with them is a foregone conclusion. When anyone undertakes

to prove in their presence that there is a God, or that the Christian revelation is credible, they listen with the forced good behaviour and ill-concealed boredom with which business men usually assist, when they do assist, at academic exercises.

*Dom Theodoret.* The reason whereof is, as I told you, that faith does not rest on argument. It is the soul's response to the voice of God within it. Arguments are the steps up to faith. The man who has got up, and has no intention of coming down, need not trouble himself about the steps.

*Mr. Eversley.* Is, then, the Catholic position wholly unaffected by argument?

*Dom Theodoret.* Argument prepares the inquirer for faith. Argument comforts in the faith one who has it already,—or, contrariwise, perplexes and annoys him, baffles him, but does not overcome him. He is not overcome, because his faith is not a mere matter of argument; he has even a certain contempt of all argument directed against his faith.

*Mr. Eversley.* But is it not a sin against intellect to condemn argument?

*Dom Theodoret.* Not where argument is brought in out of place. It is the office of intellect, now to debate and argue, now to conclude and assent, and to carry assent, where so it is proper, even to that firm and irrevocable statutory position which is called certitude. Arrived at certitude, intellect will hear no more, and, like a judge, closes the case. Faith is a supernatural certitude. Further, there is such a thing as satiety of argument, and consequent distrust of it, in those who are most proficient in its use. You have heard of the shop boy who would not eat jam, because, he said, "We makes it." Newman's friend, Sergeant Bellasis, once told Dr. Whitty, S.J., that he himself had almost got beyond the stage of susceptibility to argument. "I have had so much practice in the Courts," he said, "that whenever I hear an argument on one side I find myself mentally constructing another to the contrary."

*Mr. Eversley.* But, surely, argument is a process of reasoning ; and Reason, or Understanding,—call it what you will,—is the one faculty given us for the attainment of Truth. Intuition, and Newman's Illative Sense, and Moral Sense, and the Mystic Sense,—if such there be,—are but *modi operandi* of that one power, Reason. We have only one Reason, and if that is bankrupt we are ruined intellectually. You do not restore the finances of a bankrupt firm by changing its name.

*Dom Theodoret.* I agree with every word you say.

*Mr. Eversley.* And yet you seem to share Newman's distrust of argument.

*Dom Theodoret.* I do. But let me explain myself. I once gave some lectures at Oxford on the *Grammar of Assent*, and had therefore to study it pretty closely. Now, with all the wealth of illustration in which the book abounds, I doubt if the Cardinal has succeeded in making his meaning quite clear. What he wants to say, so far as I can fathom his purpose, is this : An argument, verbally drawn out in logical form, leads to an irrefragable conclusion even in concrete matter,—on one condition, that the verbal premises be a full and adequate expression of all the relevant facts. With this condition wanting, the conclusion is merely hypothetical and speculative, and hangs in the air. Now this condition usually is wanting. It is the most difficult thing in the world to pack all the facts of a complex case into one proposition, or into a series of propositions forming a syllogistic series. Many considerations impress a man's judgment, which he cannot think out in words. These considerations are sometimes rational, often irrational,—sometimes intuitions, often prepossessions and prejudices,—but they form an unwritten or unvoiced comment on the spoken or written text, and modify or even reverse, in your mind's court, the formulated judgment which it is logic's triumph to produce. I can give you an illustration of that. I have had much practice in writing : yet I seldom put down on paper just what I have in my mind, but something else. That is why men are better than their books. I have before now found a writer,



whom I much disliked when I read him, quite a reasonable person when I came to talk to him. Again, I have sometimes had to make suit in writing for some request that I was particularly anxious to have granted. But as I read the letter over, it struck me that I myself should scarcely grant the request on the grounds there written down. And yet I considered the request reasonable, and one that should be granted. I had to trust my correspondent's insight to "read between the lines," and discern more than I had succeeded in expressing; else he could but refuse. It was a saying of Archbishop Ullathorne that no more reasons should be appended to a command than were requisite to let the subject know thoroughly what had to be done, and so enable him to execute the order intelligently. "Beyond that," he said, "it is unjust to yourself and to the person commanded to allege reasons; for the reasons alleged can never contain the full weight of all the motives that influence you, and are often insufficient for the purpose to which they are alleged; thus you call upon your man to act, not upon authority, which he would obey, but upon argument, which he must see is insufficient."

*Mr. Eversley.* I wonder if the Bishop fetched that idea from Edgbaston. It is very Newman-like, and pervades the whole *Grammar of Assent*. But now that we recognise the ambiguity of the term "argument," may I repeat my question: Is the Catholic position wholly unaffected by argument? Perhaps you can answer, as they do in the schools, by some distinction of that ambiguous term.

*Dom Theodoret.* You are trying to pin me tight, as one does an adder with a forked stick. I don't quite like such compression. You must allow me the liberty of substituting for "argument" another term, "appeal to reason." Then I answer straight: Far from being unaffected, the Catholic position wholly rests on an appeal to reason. But not on a mere human appeal. Let me explain myself. There are Catholics for whom faith is a continual effort, quite as much of a continual effort as the observance of the law of purity, and there are Catholics for whom it is no effort at all. In the latter



class, so far as I have observed, you may rank the majority of our Catholic labouring population in the North of England and in Ireland. How long the blissful securing of their faith will last under the new conditions of education, I cannot tell. Anyhow, the interest of our inquiry centres in the former class, who are also, as a rule, the more educated, leisured, and thoughtful class. The Catholic whom I am contemplating is perfectly appreciative of the tremendous intellectual assault now being delivered upon Christianity in the name of physical science, history, biblical criticism, and philosophy,—particularly philosophy of the idealist and pessimist types. The assault is a trial and temptation to him, and he has to plant his feet firmly like a man in a high wind. What else is he to do but live with God, bear in mind daily the great issues of the life to come, and look to his faith as the one promise of the issue of eternity being favourable to him? In all this, is he not rational? Is he not answering to some appeal made to his reason? The appeal is not irrespective of the ordinary facts of his human experience, the catechism that he learnt in youth, the good words that he has heard spoken, the majesty and beauty of the Catholic Church. But these human considerations are but preliminaries. In the last resort the appeal is divine; it comes straight from the throne of God: it is the voice of God sounding in his heart, and moving his intelligence and will as they would not be moved in the ordinary course of nature.

*Mr. Eversley.* How do you prove that?

*Dom Theodoret.* I cannot prove it. The only way to be assured of it is to turn a faithful Christian man, and then you have it within you. The unbeliever disbelieves in this voice of God. Whether he has heard it and rejected it, in a particular case, it is not for us to say. But the voice is sometimes heard and rejected, and the unbelief becomes sin.

*Mr. Eversley.* This daily direct intercourse between God and the soul is a point overlooked by our psychologists.

*Dom Theodoret.* They do right to overlook it; for psychology is the science of the natural operations of the human mind;

but these divine locutions of God to the soul are supernatural,—they are what theologians call “actual graces.”

*Mr. Eversley.* Now I bethink me of a psychological theory which illustrates this doctrine of grace. I mean the theory of Avicenna, who denied to the human mind any *intellectus agens* of its own, or power intrinsic to the individual of forming universal concepts; and maintained that these concepts were continually being impressed upon us by the one supreme active Intellect, which he took to be God Himself.\*

*Dom Theodoret.* An interesting speculation that of old Ibn-Sina. He was right in supposing a continual direct communication from the Divine Mind to man’s mind. Only he took that communication to be part of the order of nature: *we* see in it an operation of grace.

*Mr. Eversley.* So faith is a work of grace, not of nature, though it presupposes nature?

*Dom Theodoret.* Exactly so. And, therefore, in any seat of learning whence all notion of grace has departed, and lecturers and lectured alike are “triple-cased in oak and brass” of Pelagianism and Naturalism, faith passes for an absurdity there; or, if any of its articles are taken to be not altogether absurd, at least believers are blamed for holding them with a tenacity much beyond their reasons.

*Mr. Eversley.* I gather from Newman that even on matters of this world men continually hold opinions with a tenacity not justifiable by the reasons which they are able to formulate in words, however justifiable sometimes by further rational considerations which they cannot express. But, surely, it can never be right to hold any belief, whether of divine faith or of earthly prudence or science, with a tenacity beyond the warrant of all your rational motives, definable and undefinable?

*Dom Theodoret.* You have gone back to the ground that we lately left. Did I not say that if, among “rational considera-

\* *Of God and His Creatures*, pp. 142, 143, 148.

tions," you reckon the inward divine assurance (πληροφορία πίστewς) (Heb. x. 22), the *peace and joy in believing* (Rom. xv. 13) supernaturally bestowed on the faithful, then faith is not firmer than the sum of rational motives warrants. Take away the voice of grace in the soul, and you find the natural reasons, explicit and implicit, in favour of the dogma of faith strong enough to afford a moral certainty, but not strong enough to beget that higher certainty, which is the certainty of divine faith. The celebrated saying, that "faith is a venture, rewarded by certainty," means, I suppose, that coming to the Church from without the fold you "venture" on a moral certainty and are "rewarded" by finding a still higher certainty. Whether the word "venture" is the most appropriate that could have been chosen, it is not for me to say.

*Mr. Eversley.* Now I see the error of a proposition, the condemnation of which, by Innocent XI in 1679, has long perplexed me. The proposition runs thus: "The will cannot make the assent of faith in itself more firm than the weight of rational motives to assent warrants." I see that "rational motives" are what you call "natural reasons"; and when it is implied that the will makes the assent of faith more firm than the weight of these reasons warrants, there is question of the will under the influence of grace.

*Dom Theodoret.* I believe you have hit the *rationale* of that interesting condemnation.

*Mr. Eversley.* Astronomers, with their telescopes, resolve what is one star to the naked eye into a double star, or "binary." And I begin to discern something binary, twofold, or double, about the certainty of faith. It seems to me there is first a human certainty,—a moral certainty founded on natural reasons, better or worse according to the condition of the individual mind; and beyond that there is a divine certainty, absolute and perfect, which is the true certainty of faith,—a certainty which is borne in upon the mind by the voice of the Lord speaking within (not, however, in the absence of external authority and definite teaching from without), and the assent

of the intelligence and will hearkening to that voice. Am I right?

*Dom Theodoret.* Quite right.

*Mr. Eversley.* And this assent of faith is specifically one in all believers, learned and unlearned, although in various degrees of firmness, as there are degrees likewise in other virtues, purity, meekness, and the rest.

*Dom Theodoret.* Just so. While you were speaking, my eyes were resting on that engraving on the wall, representing a valley in South Devon, which I have some reason to remember with fond regret. My only sister lies buried there, having been a nun in the adjoining convent. I have not been so long out of England as to have forgotten those Devonshire lanes, tunnels of verdure with red clay for a basis,—utter impossibility of seeing where you are being taken to, till you find yourself shot out from the end of the tunnel into the middle of a field, and then you scramble over high hedges, and brave the wrath of farmers, to make your way home. Pardon my distraction, but I have been thinking of those Devonshire hedges as illustrations of your binary or twofold rampart of faith. And yet not an exact illustration either : for a Devonshire hedge, as I dare say you know, is a thick quickset hedge, growing on a mound of earth and stones.

*Mr. Eversley.* In the Isle of Man they have the mound without the quickset.

*Dom Theodoret.* But the two certainties of faith are not built one on the other like that. The supernatural certainty does not rest on the natural, but presupposes it. We shall have to improve upon the Devonshire hedge to get our similitude. We must put the quickset in front of the mound. The quickset will represent the certainty begot of natural reasons : the stout mound behind, of clay compacted with large stones, will represent the assent of faith proper to the voice of God revealing. We must, further, suppose the thorn branches to arch over, interlace, and cover the mound, preventing anybody from getting at it and tampering with it, or pulling the stones out : for



natural reasons protect the faith, and in the concrete mind of the individual believer, especially of the unphilosophical sort, it is not easy to distinguish the natural from the supernatural assurance.

*Mr. Eversley.* I see the illustration, and shall remember it on my walks when I get home.

*Dom Theodoret.* The adversaries of our religion do not discern the stout mound of earth and stone, that divine assurance which makes the reality of our faith ; but seeing the covering quickset hedge they attack that, and ply natural reason against natural reason. And in this assault they are not wholly unsuccessful. Many an argument alleged by a Catholic controversialist has been broken down and proved inconclusive. Many Catholics are poor hands at logic ; many are wanting in erudition. Such people are sometimes protected by their very incapacity : they do not see the gist and bearing of an objection ; they do not know when they are beaten. A more acute Catholic, however, may find himself confronted, now by logic and learning, now by satire ; he sees how the attack makes against the Catholic position, and no ready answer occurs to him. For him, in such a case, the quickset hedge is broken through : there remains only the earthen and stony mound. Beaten in argument he falls back upon faith. The argument, he knows, must be somehow inconclusive ; but for the moment he sees no escape from it. He believes, not seeing, in despite of opposing spectres.

*Mr. Eversley.* One could wish that such assaults in these days were not so frequent and not so potent. They bear hard at times upon every thinking Catholic.

*Dom Theodoret.* Yes, at times ; and at other times they go for nothing. So do temptations against purity bear hard upon Christian youth, and temptations against honesty upon an employee with a starving family. God wills that every good gift for the next world, though it be bestowed without labour, yet be not kept without fighting. This is the obscurity of faith. One wishes faith were not so obscure. One wishes that of



the fullness of light in which the Blessed see God some little glimmer or reflection were shed upon the path of us wayfarers. Our sky is clouded, here by a speculative objection, here by a failure in practice. We wonder now what a chapter in Exodus can mean, now why the Church did not rule the world to better effect in the ages when she had control of it; now we are shocked by a scandal in the sanctuary, now by the bitter national dissensions that paralyse Catholic action. Within our immediate ken of the battle-field the good cause seems well-nigh overthrown. But the battle rages over a long line of territory, and for more years than there are months in one man's life. We must trust our Commander-in-Chief. We must believe that He is competent to wage the war. We must make up our minds for the obscurity in which we march, and fight on. Whoever will have it that the light of Christian revelation is not enough for a man of his discernment to believe and live by, must not be surprised at the Last Day to find himself ranked among the *cowardly and unbelieving* whose place is in the *burning lake* (Apoc. xxi. 8).

*Mr. Eversley.* You mean that we must take God's terms and use our opportunity as it is given, and not lose our salvation as the Athenians lost their empire,—there I see my old friend Thucydides on the wall,—by “craving after other conditions than the conditions of actual life, while not giving to actual opportunities the attention which is their due” (ζητούντες τε ἄλλο τι, ὥς εἰπεῖν, ἢ ἐν οἷς ζῶμεν, φρονούντες δὲ οὐδὲ περὶ τούτων ἱκανῶς. *Thuc.*, III, 39).



## CONVERSATION V

### FAITH FED BY PRAYER

*Mr. Rollright.* I have no difficulties against faith that I can specify and number: I can instance no particularly telling objection: no one article is to me harder of belief than another: religion from first to last is all one difficulty. I am like the patient who goes to his doctor saying that he has no pain here and no pain there, only an "all-overish" feeling of being ill.

*Dom Lawrence* (reading from Newman's *University Sermon on the Theory of Development*). "It is a question whether that strange and painful feeling of unreality, which religious men experience from time to time, when nothing seems true, or good, or right, or profitable,—when faith seems a name, and duty a mockery, and all endeavours to do right absurd and hopeless, and all things forlorn and dreary, as if religion were wiped out of the world,—may not be the direct effect of the temporary obscuration of some master vision, which unconsciously supplies the mind with spiritual life and peace."

*Mr. Rollright.* My health, I am happy to say, is all that I could desire. For all worldly purposes I am lively and hearty enough. Only for the things of faith, the truths of the supernatural order, and actions exercised in acceptance of those truths, am I languid and move slowly, hesitate and grope and wonder where I am, like a traveller caught in a white mist upon the hills.

*Dom Lawrence.* I am glad your health is good, as well for your own sake as also because it enables us to set aside from this discussion the not inconsiderable difficulties to faith, or rather to the feeling of faith, which have their origin in mere physical depression. Health presupposed, I think there is something in Newman's "master vision which unconsciously supplies the mind with spiritual life and peace." He means, I take it, some great religious idea, not very definite nor clearly expressed in consciousness, yet ever remaining at the back of the mind, and yielding a certain *joy and peace in believing* (Rom. xv. 13), except at seasons when it suffers temporary obscuriation. This idea will be to us the rallying-point of our faith. It will not be the same idea in every man, nor always perhaps the same idea in the same man, nor is it easily brought out into consciousness and clothed in words. Still, we do well to search for it, and state it in as clear language as we can. Some written form of words here may serve as a torch to rekindle the lamp of the original flame, when that burns low. The thought will be more abiding for being registered.

*Mr. Rollright.* I am not aware of ever having had any such "master vision." I am sure I have none now. I have faith, but I feel as though it took all the strength of my soul to go on barely believing. I have no energy left for devotion in prayer, and my religion has become a most dry business. What am I to do, to find faith easy, as it once was, and to feel consolation and joy in mysteries which I still believe?

*Dom Lawrence.* You must pray more, and overcome yourself so to do. It were also very helpful if you would make a week's spiritual retreat with a good director, and in that time review your own life and conduct, adding a prayerful study of the great truths of our faith. At the end of the retreat, I promise you, faith will be far more of a felt reality than it is to you at present. There is something else I had to say. St. Peter tells us that *prophecy*, which may be taken to include all Church teaching, is *as a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn* (2 Pet. i. 19). As hope is inconsistent with sight of the thing hoped for, according to St. Paul (Rom. viii. 24), so

likewise are faith and sight incompatible, and that by the very definition of faith (Heb. xi. 1). We can no more see the objects of faith, or have full evidence and adequate knowledge of them, than passengers in the mid-Atlantic can see the land for which they are steering. Such passengers can only trust the captain, that he knows where the land lies, and will take them thither, if they will stay on board. But we grow impatient with what St. Peter calls the *dark place*, and what theologians call "the obscurity of faith"; we want to see in a situation where all that we can do is to believe. This impatience is especially incident to such as have believed long, and have speculated considerably on what they hold by faith.

*Mr. Rollright.* I own I have often longed for death out of what I hope is a pardonable curiosity. I am so curious to see what the next world will be like.

*Dom Lawrence.* And there is no seeing that until you die and pass away hence; meanwhile, you are fain to be content with faith and its obscurities. It is some comfort to think that the Pope is no better off than you are. We are not meant to travel to heaven in the light of visions.

*Mr. Rollright.* I am afraid our hagiographers make too much of the visions of the Saints. I fancy I might be a Saint myself, if I were caught up daily in a royal chair to hear the songs of praise sung by the Blessed in heaven, as I read the other day of St. Martina and St. Mary Magdalen in an old Breviary which I saw in a museum.

*Dom Lawrence.* Decidedly not the latest edition [A.D. 2020]. Yet faith is a great wonder and singular bounty of God, more wonderful and more profitable than any temporary ravishment into heaven.

*Mr. Rollright.* Is it anything more than a reasoned conviction following logically upon premises?

*Dom Lawrence.* Yes, everything more.



*Mr. Rollright.* What do you mean ?

*Dom Lawrence.* I mean that no amount of mere reasoning can ever issue in an act of faith. Every believer must be reasoned with according to his capacity,—children and simple folk in a simple and childish way ; the educated and intellectual with some subtlety and erudition. Every believer likewise assents to reasons, which assent, under the present conditions of his understanding, is rational and wise. But, so far as it is an assent paid to reasons, it is not yet the assent of faith. Faith cannot be without the actual grace of God, or what St. Thomas calls “ the inward prompting of God inviting ” the soul to believe (*interiori instinctu Dei invitantis*, 2a-2ae, q. 2, art. 9, ad. 3). Let me read you some words of St. John Chrysostom (hom. 7 in Rom. iv. 20) : “ Such is faith, clearer than any proof from reasonings and more persuasive : for it is impossible for any second reasoning process, coming in upon faith, to shake and make it totter in after time. He that is persuaded by arguments may be unpersuaded by the same ; but whoso rests firm upon faith has fortified his hearing against all arguments of a destructive tendency.”

*Mr. Rollright.* He is firm in the embrace of divine truth from which no man can separate him, is it not so ?

*Dom Lawrence.* You have it exactly. Faith is a gift of God in the supernatural order, a special gift, singular and above nature, no less so than the priest's power to consecrate the Eucharist, or the bishop's power to ordain other priests. Consecration, ordination, act of faith, all three acts are impossible to man, as man, having no more than man's proper powers. Without actual grace a man may have a philosophic belief in a given article of faith, *e.g.*, the eternity of God, but faith he cannot have. Faith, however, differs from priestly and episcopal powers of Order in other respects and particularly in this, that powers of Order, once given, are indefectible, and last for life even in the unworthiest of ministers ; whereas faith, once offered to an adult, needs an effort of the will to accept it ; and, once accepted, it needs a further effort of the will to keep it.

A Catholic is a Catholic because, under the prompting of God's Spirit, he has chosen so to be and wills so to remain. And he might will otherwise: there is no irresistible necessity upon him, no overwhelming logic, no interior constraint. Faith is no more a necessity in the order of thought than purity in the order of practice. Both faith and purity are things to pray for, and under God to guard manfully.



## CONVERSATION VI

### ORIGINAL SIN

*Mr. Timmins.* I have been engaged in the bringing out of a new edition of St. Augustine for the Silver Latinity Society.

*Dom Prosper.* The aim of which society, as I gather from its title, is rather linguistic than theological.

*Mr. Timmins.* Just so. I have been employed as reader and corrector of the press. But from a mere typographical interest I have been gradually carried to a concern about the substance of what the great African Doctor had to say.

*Dom Prosper.* I do not wonder at that. And which portion of the controversies in which St. Augustine spent his life has interested you most? His early conflicts with the Manicheans or with the Donatists?

*Mr. Timmins.* No, his later works, which gave his adversaries occasion to accuse him of having relapsed into Manicheism himself; I mean his writings on the Pelagian controversy.

*Dom Prosper.* I suspect that you have found St. Augustine painful reading?

*Mr. Timmins.* Fascinating, you should say; yes, and in some degree painful, as all fascination is apt to be. I have become saturated with Augustinianism. My very dreams are of election and reprobation; and when I see a crowd, I think of the "rejected batch," *massa damnata*. But especially I am exercised about the Fall and Original Sin.

*Dom Prosper.* Perhaps you will tell me, from your reading,

what you gather St. Augustine's views about Original Sin to have been?

*Mr. Timmins.* Speaking roughly and without precise references, I should say that the measure of Original Sin is the happiness of the earthly paradise, of which Original Sin is the privation. St. Augustine makes much of the text (Heb. vii. 9-10) that Levi and thereby the Jewish priesthood paid tithe to Melchisedech when Abraham paid him tithe, for Levi was in the loins of Abraham: so we were all in the loins of Adam when he sinned. Adam's sin carried with it the loss of charity and the friendship of God, the loss of all title to heaven and the vision of God, the loss of all the virtues that make for heaven, the loss of free-will so far as free-will means ability to resist severe temptation, the loss of the command of reason over appetite, so that appetite now rages against reason, the loss of knowledge, of immunity from sickness and death: all these losses accompany the guilt of Original Sin. By their sin all mankind has become as one bad batch or lump of dough (*massa damnata*), out of which individuals are removed only by baptism, that is, by incorporation in Christ, the second Adam. When the Pelagians urged against Augustine from his own writings that sin was an evil act of the will, and that babes new-born had no active will, he replied that that saying, though otherwise true, did not hold of the sin which is the punishment of another previous sin (*peccatum quod sit poena alterius peccati*). One chief appanage of Original Sin Augustine held to be the rebellion of the sexual appetite against reason, which rebellion is commonly understood by the name of "concupiscence." Equally with the Council of Trent (Sess. 5, can. 5) St. Augustine allowed that this rebellion went on even after the removal of Original Sin by baptism. Equally with the Council of Trent St. Augustine allowed that the said rebellion in the baptised is not sinful so long as their will resists it, as it is able to do by God's grace. But in the unbaptised he thought that this grace was wanting; and that consequently their will must in a greater or less degree succumb to concupiscence. Now I venerate the sanctity and learning of St. Augustine: I know that he is by excellence "the Doctor of grace": still I find this



Augustinian theology very gloomy, and to use a text which he was fond of quoting in this connection, *a heavy weight upon the children of Adam* (Ecclus. xiv. 1).

*Dom Prosper.* They seem to take it lightly enough in our age.

*Mr. Timmins.* Yes, but it was otherwise in the fifth century, and again in the sixteenth and seventeenth, when men dreaded the judgments of God, feared for their own souls, and read serious books, which no one does now.

*Dom Prosper.* Except under pressure of examinations.

*Mr. Timmins.* Hardly even then : our examinees are content with attending lectures and gathering "tips." So Augustine nowadays is little read, and his theology little considered. Another and a more pregnant reason for the neglect of the subject is the abuse of the Higher Criticism : your critic no longer believes in any Adam and Eve, or any Garden of Eden. Ask the average University man what Original Sin is, and he will answer that the only original sin which he can recognise is an incontestable proneness to evil-doing which he remarks in all men, even in the baptised ; and this proneness to evil he takes to be the residue of the savagery of primeval ancestors, eked out (according to the law of heredity) by the transmitted wickedness of later progenitors : he ascribes it, not to any primeval *fall*, but to the *low level* at which humanity started, and into which (by the law of atavism) individual transmitters of the race have again and again more or less fallen back : not that the first man tumbled into a ditch, but that, so to speak, he was born there, he is all out of the filth, *of the slime of the earth*, albeit not in the Scriptural sense ; and that on the whole man never stood any higher than he stood now. What would Augustine say to that ?

*Dom Prosper.* He might reasonably ask how it was all proved. You don't prove it by pronouncing, as though it were a magic spell, the name "anthropology." The science of anthropology proves nothing of the sort. Anthropology deals

with the development of human society : now Adam and Eve were not society. Even if we discovered and identified their mummies, we should be none the wiser as to the few short hours of happiness (possibly they were no more) in which they spent their earliest existence. The other day I picked up for a half-rupee in an old bookstall in Bombay, a shred of ancient Oxford, called *Political and Moral Essays* (Benziger, 1902), from which I will treat you to a scrap, the more willingly as I happen to agree with the author : " All that the Church asserts is the unity of the human race, all descended from one ancestor, all born in original sin through the transgression of that ancestor, and all in need of the redemption of our common Saviour. Of course, the Church also asserts whatever is meant and asserted by the narrative of Genesis, according as that narrative is the word of God. . . . The writer of Genesis throws no light on the social condition of earliest mankind at large, beyond informing us that they were very wicked. Whatever knowledge Adam had in Paradise, we are nowhere told that he was able to perpetuate that knowledge in his children over any wide region of the globe. . . . Fallen into sin, struggling with a nature both within and without no longer subject to him, roaming in search of a livelihood over an earth under a curse, man would have degenerated rapidly, and soon fallen very low " (pp. 177-8).

*Mr. Timmins.* Let us leave anthropology to explore its own province, and revert to theology and St. Augustine.

*Dom Prosper.* With all my heart.

*Mr. Timmins.* You must not be surprised if I produce a list of points on which St. Augustine's teaching rather shocks me.

*Dom Prosper.* I should not be surprised at a long list of such points. Like other great teachers, St. Augustine deals out strong meat, hard of digestion to queasy stomachs.

*Mr. Timmins.* Men punished for a sin, which they had neither heart nor hand in,—punished in untold millions, the whole population of the earth from the beginning to the end of the history,—punished with a punishment so severe, all the ills

that flesh is heir to, all evils physical and moral in this world, and the loss of eternal happiness in the next, such punishment for one sin, committed before the persons punished had any existence, there is the first point that shocks me.

*Dom Prosper.* Let us face the difficulty deliberately and calmly. It is not one to which you can write down the answer in three lines. Let me draw your attention to a passage in that good Augustinian, St. Thomas Aquinas. In his *Summa Theologica* (2a, 2ae, q. 108, art. 4), inquiring whether men may be punished for an error committed not by any will of theirs, and coming (ad. 2m.) to the case of the removal of a bishop's see from a town by reason of its poverty or its wickedness, he distinguishes "pain of sense," *i.e.*, any severe bodily pain, from "pain of loss," which is the withdrawal of a privilege; he then says that no one should be visited with pain of sense in any form of extreme severity, who has not done wrong of his own will; but coming to pain of loss he says that privileges may be withdrawn from people whose personal conduct has not been blameworthy; and thus they may be punished "without fault, although not without cause," especially when the privilege is not of a personal but of a public character, as is the cathedral rank of a town.

*Mr. Timmins.* You admit then that Original Sin is no fault of ours?

*Dom Prosper.* It is no actual sin of ours, no fault of our own will: yet, in a certain true sense, it is our fault and our sin: to that I will revert presently. What I wish you to observe is that all the heavy load of punishment which you have rightly described as inflicted for Adam's sin, consists in a withdrawal of privileges not due to our nature: it is a "pain of loss," and a loss of things that we had no right to.

*Mr. Timmins.* How do you mean?

*Dom Prosper.* I mean that, apart from any sin of any first parent, man in his mere human nature as man is mortal, and, as you say, heir to ills innumerable, because he is flesh. What-

ever may happen to any other animal in the way of sickness, mishap, and death, happens naturally to man. Nor has man, as such, however meritorious his life, any sort of right or title to enter into heaven, if you mean by "heaven" what heaven actually is, the direct vision of God. For the sin of Adam, he and all his posterity were deprived of a number of gratuitous privileges, and left to the poverty, meanness, and miseries that are incident to a nature half animal and half spiritual. Is there anything so very shocking or surprising in that? You have read of attainders in English history. We are the children of a nobleman who was attainted for treason against the Almighty, and thereupon reduced to the grade of a commoner, he and all his posterity.

*Mr. Timmins.* But does St. Augustine say that?

*Dom Prosper.* O you cunning man, what a trap you have laid for me! Do you know how that question has been disputed?

*Mr. Timmins.* Really, I had no idea——

*Dom Prosper.* I have the rash generosity to avow my own impression that St. Augustine does not say so, but would have said so, had he witnessed the discussions that have taken place over his writings since the sixteenth century. I say I nowhere find in St. Augustine the statement that the penalty inflicted upon the human race in consequence of Adam's sin was merely a deprivation of privileges not due to human nature, privileges in the absence of which humanity proper still stood intact. Let us take the great privilege of immortality. St. Augustine never wearies of insisting on the texts: "God hath not made death . . . God created man unto incorruption, . . . but by the envy of the devil death came into the world" (*Wisdom* i. 13; ii. 23, 24). "Death does not attach to God's work," he says, "because God hath not made death" (*Op. imp. contra Julian*, iv. 31). St. Augustine, and St. Thomas after him, always speak *historically*: they never consider human nature merely as such, which is the order of *philosophy*. They consider how God actually made man, not how He might have made him. St.



Augustine seems never to have viewed the following two facts in their simultaneous connection :

(a) Death is the natural winding up of every animal nature, and therefore of human nature, since that, too, is animal. Death is a natural incident of human nature.

(b) There is no intrinsic impossibility in God creating man liable to all the incidents natural to human nature. God might very well have created man mortal from the first. Immortality to man is quite a gratuitous privilege, and need never have been conferred.

St. Augustine, I believe, would have denied neither of these two statements ; but he never enunciates them, nor marks their consequences. That luminous word "supernatural" has no place in the index to his writings. What is said of mortality is equally true of what St. Augustine calls "concupiscence." Perfect command of the animal propensities is no part of the nature of a "rational animal." God might have created man without this perfect command. Still less is sanctifying grace, or "charity," as St. Augustine regularly calls it, an intrinsic constituent of human nature, as is reason, or risibility. To deny that, is to immerse grace in nature, and confound all difference between them, which is the rankest Pelagianism. God might have created man complete in all human gifts but destitute of sanctifying grace ; and man, created so, would not have been any object of God's displeasure. He would have been, as Genesis says, *very good*, all that he ought to be according to his kind.

*Mr. Timmins.* Then all the effect of Adam's sin was to make man from thenceforth what man might have been made from the first ? I doubt if St. Augustine would have allowed that.

*Dom Prosper.* No, nor the Catholic Church either. This point is important, and not so easy ; therefore I will travel somewhat far afield to illustrate it. There on the top shelf I descry the volume of Oxford Statutes put into my hands many years ago with a caution to observe the same, so far as they concerned me. Let me get it down. Here is what I wanted.



It is a section not wholly devoid of historic interest, *De degradatione*, about depriving a graduate of his degree. I read the dear old Latin, "Vice-Cancellarius ipsum (delinquentem) habitu gradui competente indutum in domo Convocationis sistendum curet, ubi ipsum Vice-Cancellarius gravi ac severa oratione increpabit, simulque atrocitatem criminis sui ei ob oculos ponet: deinde ipsius mandato e bedellis inferioribus unus singula gradus sui insignia, primo pileum, mox caputium, deinde capam, postremo togam detrahet; ac eum in modum, cunctis insignibus academicis exutum et nudatum, e domo Convocationis proturbabit." You see the delinquent is to be arrayed in full academics, and soundly rated by the "Vice": then cap, hood, and gown are to be taken off him, and thus "stripped and denuded of all academical insignia," he is to be *proturbed* (kicked out?) into the street,—the "Broad," I presume. There he will be the compeer of any other man in the street, with coat, waistcoat, trousers, underclothing, skin and internal contents, all complete, *homo inter homines*. Yet should you say that he was just what he might have been from the first, neither better off nor worse off than the townspeople about him?

*Mr. Timmins.* By no means; he is a disgraced man: there is a brand and stigma of shame upon him: Oxford is no place for him any longer, he had better leave by the earliest train.

*Dom Prosper.* Suppose further that he was one who had received this unusual favour from the University, that all his male descendants for all time should be born Masters of Arts; and that for his transgression this privilege also had been taken from his family along with the loss of his own degree; how would those children figure in Oxford?

*Mr. Timmins.* A certain slur would be cast on them, which would not rest on the children of the rest of the citizens.

*Dom Prosper.* And yet they are fine healthy children.

*Mr. Timmins.* Yes, but they ought to be Masters of Arts,

and are not, by fault of their father, their head and representative, redounding upon them.

*Dom Prosper.* You have exactly expressed the condition in which we are all born before God. Adam, our first ancestor, for his disobedience was deprived of the rank of child of God by grace, and of the title to the vision of God in heaven which that rank conferred. Hereupon he was left, not an ordinary man, but a man degraded and disgraced from being something much more than man. God regarded him as one who ought to have been in sanctifying grace, and was not. He was under God's anger, God's ban. He was fain to fly to hide his shame. And we his children, who should have been born in God's grace, were born out of it : we, who had been destined heirs to heaven, were born without any title to heaven. This absence of sanctifying grace, in children who ought to have it, but have it not, through the fault of their head and representative redounding upon them,—this is precisely what is meant by Original Sin. It is a personal sin, being a personal privation, although it is not a sin committed by the personal will of the sinner. It places the child under the ban and displeasure of God : it bars his access to the Father, whose child and heir he ought to have been : it incapacitates him for the kingdom of heaven, in which he ought to have found a place. Hereupon we may construct a sum of proportion : as the kingdom of heaven is to a university degree, a peerage, or any earthly honour or emolument ; so is the shame and loss of deprivation of the kingdom of heaven to the shame and loss attending degradation from the pinnacle of earthly dignity.

*Mr. Timmins.* Have not men sometimes felt reason to be proud of a degradation or of an attainder ?

*Dom Prosper.* Yes, when they regarded the procedure as unjust, and themselves as martyrs in the cause of right. But Adam and Eve, and we in them, were degraded for shameful treason and enormous ingratitude. They disbelieved the plain word of God, and put faith in the *old serpent* (Apoc. xii. 9), God's enemy : on his suggestion they doubted the goodwill of their Benefactor, and conspired to steal round Him and,

without His consent, to bench as His equals upon the throne of knowledge (Gen. iii. 4-6). Mystic and fragmentary as the narrative of Genesis is, we gather from it that the prevarication of our first parents was a crime of the first magnitude, an historic sin, worse than *the sin of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin* (3 Kings xiv. 16), or the idolatry of Manasses, or even Cain's deed of murder. As children of Adam, we bear a brand upon us at our birth, worse than if we were children of Cain or Chanaan.

*Mr. Timmins.* I understand, then, that Original Sin consists precisely in this : that whereas by Divine ordinance we ought to be in the state of sanctifying grace, we are found, previous to our baptism, out of that state of grace in consequence of the rebellion of our first father and representative, Adam.

*Dom Prosper.* Just so, and when one understands how sanctifying grace is the greatest boon that God Himself can possibly bestow upon any mere creature, one can form some idea of the shame and misery of standing, by "a taint in blood," deprived of so honourable an estate. There was a point in St. Augustine's taunt to the Pelagians : "So slender is your esteem of the kingdom of heaven that you reckon exclusion from it to be not so much as a light penalty, even no penalty at all" (*Op. imp. adv. Jul.*, iii. 97).

*Mr. Timmins.* So far so good. You have made St. Augustine's doctrine less repulsive to me, nay, even awe-inspiring and venerable.

*Dom Prosper.* So indeed it is, so far as it is the doctrine of the Church. But you cannot say of St. Augustine, neither can you say the like of any other Father, that whatever Augustine affirms the Church teaches.

*Mr. Timmins.* I want to know if St. Augustine is right in holding that an unbaptised man has no strength to resist his passions : that having no strength to resist, he gives way and indulges them : that in indulging them he sins mortally ; and finding no repentance he goes to hell and suffers all the pains of that place of torment as well for his original sin as also for

the actual sins which in him have been part of the penalty of his original sin.

*Dom Prosper.* I give you back your own question, "Does Augustine say that?"

*Mr. Timmins.* He seems to say it. He says things from which all that I have attributed to him seems to follow logically.

*Dom Prosper.* Is it not generally allowed in controversy that it is not fair to tax a man with all the consequences which seem to follow logically from his utterances, but only with those consequences which he himself is pleased to draw and formulate and stand by? The man may have other unspoken thoughts which, if uttered, would defeat the sequence; or, maybe, he would withdraw his statements rather than face those consequences if he saw them.

*Mr. Timmins.* Anyhow St. Augustine says things which seem to lead to those conclusions.

*Dom Prosper.* For example?

*Mr. Timmins.* I have two extracts set down in my notebook. Here is one from the *Enchiridion* (c. 27): "The condemned lump of the whole human race lay in its miseries, or rather rolled and fell headlong from evil to evil; and, joining the side of the angels who had sinned, paid the richly deserved penalty of its wicked desertion; for part of the just anger of God is whatever the wicked gladly (*libenter*) do under blind and ungoverned passion, and whatever they suffer against their will by punishments either manifest or concealed."

*Dom Prosper.* Ah, those lessons of the second nocturn for Septuagesima Sunday! Holy Church wants to get us into a serious mood when she appoints them to be chanted from the lectern that day.

*Mr. Timmins.* Here is something further which is not in the lessons. "By making an ill use of free-will man lost himself and it" (*libero arbitrio male utens homo et se perdidit et ipsum.*—*Enchirid.*, c. 30).



*Dom Prosper.* Ohe, *jam satis* ! Let me get down the Council of Trent.

*Mr. Timmins.* Before you quote from Trent hear some more of St. Augustine : " In baptism the body is sanctified so as to be no longer under the tyranny (*obnoxium*) of the lust of the flesh that is in it. Under the tyranny of that lust every man is born ; and under that tyranny he will die unless he is born again " (*Op. imp. c. Jul.*, vi. 14). Here the phrase, " under the tyranny of lust " (*obnoxius concupiscentiae*) cannot mean " unable not to be tempted," for that inability continues after baptism : it must mean " unable not to sin."

*Dom Prosper.* If we had the clear word of a Doctor of the Church on one side of a contradiction, and the clear word of a General Council on the other, no Catholic could hesitate to follow the latter against the former. Now the Council of Trent says expressly, speaking of the effects of the Fall on men as yet unbaptised : " Free-will was not extinguished in them, although it was weakened and shaken " (Sess. 6, cap. 1). But have we the clear word of St. Augustine on the other side ?

*Mr. Timmins.* Too clear, it seems to me.

*Dom Prosper.* Not so clear that much may not be said in explanation. The peculiar genius of Augustine dealt with men in masses, not as individuals. On the one hand was the Church, the mystical Body of Christ ; on the other the " rejected batch," *massa damnata*, of the rest of humanity : Babylon on this side, Jerusalem on that. His speculation turned on the two cities, not on the citizens severally ; and in the two cities he discerned two opposite camps and war irreconcilable between them. Not that the author of the *Confessions* knew not the mazes of individual character ; but his theology is not of the individual. The individualism of our time is not to be looked for in the Fathers, nor in the Doctors of the Middle Ages. When Augustine said that fallen man had lost his free-will as well as lost himself, he may have meant no more than this, that fallen mankind collectively was under a necessity of sinning, and that in a fallen race there was sure to be much sin.



*Mr. Timmins.* I don't see what you mean by saying that the race is under a necessity of sinning. If the race, surely every individual.

*Dom Prosper.* No. Every individual man goes through a number of grave temptations. If he has only the natural liberty of his own will, unsupported by the grace of God, he runs great risk of sinning every time he is tempted. Consider now a multitude, every individual of whom many a time and oft runs a great risk of sinning. Is it not a necessity that in such a multitude there should be many sins committed? Think of a forest, with every tree severely rocked by the tempest time after time: is there no necessity that in time many trees be blown down?

*Mr. Timmins.* I admit that.

*Dom Prosper.* Coming back to our multitude of unbaptised fallen men, you see that every one of them has liberty and free-will to resist any given temptation, but it is a sorely-tried liberty and an almost overborne free-will.

*Mr. Timmins.* And therefore surely the fall is not very grievously sinful.

*Dom Prosper.* That depends. When taxed by the Pelagian bishop Julian with teaching that God lays upon men commands impossible for them to keep, St. Augustine repudiated such teaching, and replied: "God commands things that can be performed; but He Himself has granted the performance of them to those who can and do perform them; and as for those who cannot, His command to them takes the form of an admonition to ask of Him the ability to perform them" (*Op. imp. c. Jul.*, iii. 116). The man hard pressed by temptation must pray; and God, in answer to his prayer, will *make issue with temptation that he may be able to bear it* (1 Cor. x. 13).

*Mr. Timmins.* That is all very well for the devout and instructed Catholic; but what is an unbaptised savage to do? What has he ever heard of the prayer, *Lead us not into temptation?* Or, abandoning savages to the ignorance that may be their excuse, do you suppose that Marcus Cicero and his brother Quintus ever once put up to God a prayer for victory over

temptation in the whole course of their lives? How should they? Who ever taught them? Not pontiffs nor augurs, nor their philosophers either.

*Dom Prosper.* I don't know why Cicero should not have cried ὦ μέγαλε Ζεῦ, or *Di, vostram fidem*, in the great crises of his life. But these secrets of consciences and divine judgments are hidden from us, and were not revealed to Augustine. St. Augustine, remember, lived in the wars. Great part of his works are controversial; and even in his devotional works, as the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, he makes many a point against his antagonists. A controversialist leans to the utmost towards his own side, pushes the facts that make for his case as far as they will go, and is sparing of any admissions that might make for his adversary. It was St. Augustine's cue against the Pelagians to make the most of Original Sin. The weakness and insufficiency of man's fallen nature, the need of baptism, the depths of evil from which the grace of our Redeemer has delivered us,—such was his perpetual theme. No doubt he believed that God was good to all men, and treated no individual unfairly; but how God shows His goodness to the benighted heathen, it was not Augustine's care to specify. Any admission in that direction would have been turned by the Pelagians against him. The maladies of Pelagianism are maladies of our age; and Augustinian teaching is as wholesome and as opportune now as ever. But we are suffering likewise from another malady, the hereditary consequences of that surfeit of Calvinism with which our seventeenth-century ancestors gorged themselves. The specific malady of our age is pessimism, an inability to make up one's mind to the goodness of an Almighty Creator. I believe that more faith is lost, and more conversions of thinking men are prevented, by this single disease of pessimism than by any other intellectual cause whatsoever.

*Mr. Timmins.* Oh that all our preachers thought so, and our controversialists, and our theologians!

*Dom Prosper.* Consequently we must take out a brief for the poor heathen, and speculate on God's indulgence for him, so far as the limits of a sane theology will allow.

*Mr. Timmins.* And this speculation is of high practical utility : for man will not become Christian, or remain Christian, unless our spiritual guides face certain questions about the goodness and just dealing of God, which they who thunder in pulpits have neglected heretofore.

*Dom Prosper.* Yet we must not part with Augustinianism. St. Thomas Aquinas is Augustinian, nay, the Church is Augustinian : the decrees of Trent reproduce the main features of Augustinian doctrine. St. Augustine's teaching must not be discarded, but explained and completed,—here and there perhaps a few bristling points filed down and rounded off. A very useful distinction, not yet fully eyed and scientifically designated in St. Augustine's time, is that between *material* and *formal* sin. Anyone conversant with the history of India,—or for that matter with the living India of the present day,—must have a very "real notion," as Newman would have called it, of the reeking, multitudinous sinfulness of heathen man. But it would not be just to count every deed of treachery, cruelty and lust, that Rajah X commits, to be the same burden upon his conscience, and consequently of the same heinousness before God, as though you and I had committed it.

*Mr. Timmins.* Of course not : that is clear to everybody, and superabundantly manifest to the student who knows what Progressive Morality means, and has mastered the ethics of anthropology.

*Dom Prosper.* Or, not to be quite so progressive, to him who understands St. Paul's sayings, Acts xvii. 30 ; Rom. iii. 25 ; vii. 7-9.\* That, then, is *formal* sin, which is done against the conscience, and against the law of God, known and recognised as such. That sin is merely *material*, which would be against the law of God, were it done by an instructed Christian, but which is done by a savage, or a barbarian, or other ill-conditioned and benighted person, not only without any adequate appreciation of its evil, but also without any such appreciation

\* διὰ τὴν πᾶρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων, where πᾶρεσιν (overlooking) is not to be confounded with ἄφεσιν (forgiveness). With the Greek Fathers, against St. Augustine, I take Rom. vii. 7 sq. to be spoken in the person of the unregenerate Jew. See my *Notes on St. Paul*, II. cc.

being justly to be looked for in him. Agreeing, then, thoroughly with Augustine, and indeed accepting the witness of our own daily experience, as to the slough of portentous wickedness in which fallen, heathen man lies grovelling, we may yet hope that much of this wickedness is of a *material* rather than of a *formal* character. I may add that only *formal* wickedness, and that of a grievous kind, and never repented of, calls for expiation in hell-fire.

*Mr. Timmins.* I shall read St. Augustine henceforth with greater equanimity, bearing in mind this distinction. But, if I am not trespassing too long upon your time,—

*Dom Prosper.* Never fear,—I am here on purpose.

*Mr. Timmins.* I have one last difficulty, rather of a delicate nature, about the propagation of Original Sin. It is this: The rebellion of concupiscence being the immediate and most manifest result of Original Sin (*Op. imp. c. Julian*, v. 16), and the same being the attendant of every sexual act, St. Augustine seems to take this concupiscence for the transmitting agent of Original Sin, so that if ever there were conception without concupiscence, the child so conceived would not inherit Original Sin.

*Dom Prosper.* I don't know that St. Augustine would admit that,—supposing the conception to take place by intercourse of the sexes, and not to be miraculous. Nor would the conclusion be admitted by modern theologians. They aver that we are conceived in Original Sin, and void of sanctifying grace, by the mere fact that we are Adam's descendants,—apart from all other circumstances of our conception. Concupiscence, wherever it is present, they say is not the transmitting agency of Original Sin, but a mere indication of the past fact of man's Fall, since it would not have been in man but for the Fall. This particular piece of Augustinianism, dearly cherished by Calvin and Jansenius, is now practically abandoned in the Catholic schools.\* It used to furnish an argument for the Virgin Birth. But the Virgin Birth stands well without it, as does also the Immaculate Conception.

*Mr. Timmins.* The hour is late ; let us not enter upon those great subjects.

\* See Pesch, *Praelectiones Dogmaticae*, vol. III, p. 139.



## CONVERSATION VII

### THE LOVE OF GOD

*Mr. Crosedale.* Let me first read you a little gospel.

*Dom Bonaventure.* With all my heart.

*Mr. Crosedale.* And one of the Scribes asked him, What is the first commandment of all? But Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is : Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God ; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength (Deut. vi. 4, 5). . . . And the Scribe said to him, Well in truth hast thou answered, master, that there is one God, and there is none other besides him ; and to love him with one's whole heart, and one's whole understanding, and one's whole soul, and one's whole strength, . . . is more than all holocausts and sacrifices. And Jesus, seeing that he had answered wisely, said to him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God (Mark xii. 28-34).

Never does Holy Writ speak more emphatically or more plainly. We are outlaws from God if we do not love Him. I wish to set over this two other testimonies, one ancient, another very modern. You know the *Magna Moralia* ?

*Dom Bonaventure.* I have read it. Evidently not by Aristotle, and yet not very post-Aristotelian, a compilation of some Peripatetic Professor about 300 B.C. A friend once pointed out to me that its date must be anterior to the rise of Stoicism, since there is no reference to Stoic doctrine, with which the Peripatetic school waged continual war.



*Mr. Crosedale.* In the *Magna Moralia*, II, 11, the love of God is set aside as a manifest impossibility. "It would be absurd for anyone to pretend to love the Supreme Being" (ἄτοπον εἰ τις φαίη φιλεῖν τὸν Δία). And the reason given is the impossibility of the love being returned (τὸ ἀντιφιλεῖσθαι).

*Dom Bonaventure.* What is said exactly is that it is impossible to be on terms of friendship with Zeus or Jupiter. Now for your second testimony.

*Mr. Crosedale.* My second testimony is my own, or at any rate of my former self. When I was a child some six years old, I recollect I had a distinct difficulty, which I found none to enter into and remove, and that was how anyone possibly could love God. I had even at that age a great idea of God. I revered Him and His law, and dreaded His everlasting anger: but when told to love Him, my difficulty was that which Ovid has expressed:

*Non bene conveniunt, nec sede morantur eadem,  
Majestas et amor.*

*Fear God, honour the King*, St. Peter says (1 Pet. ii. 17), but how was I to love either? They were both so much above me. Such were the thoughts of my childish mind: I tremble even now to write them. Sometimes I ask myself: Am I yet quite rid of the difficulty? And which am I to love supremely, solely, the God of the Old Testament or of the New?

*Dom Bonaventure.* Surely they are one God.

*Mr. Crosedale.* I do not deny that. They are one absolutely, but relatively to us they do not appear in the same aspect, and they inspire quite different sentiments.

*Dom Bonaventure.* I cannot agree with you there. I often muse on the unity and consistency of God's character throughout the sacred volume.

*Mr. Crosedale.* Contrast John xv. with Ezechiel xxxii.

*Dom Bonaventure.* Is that a fair contrast? God is speaking

to His intimate friends in the one place : in the other He is threatening His enemies. Against Ezechiel xxxii you might set over John viii. 21-59, allowing for the difference between the divine and the human nature in our Lord. For some parallel to John xv you might read Isaias xii. The New Testament is literally built into the Old as first-floor into basement story. And there is the same God in each : but of God become Man in the New Testament you have the history, in the Old He dimly appears in type and prophecy.

*Mr. Croседale.* I grant you that, if you consider God in His divine nature, He appears the same in both Testaments. But if you consider God in the human nature which He has assumed, you cannot deny that we regard with quite other feelings Yahweh the Lawgiver of Sina, and Jesus born in Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary.

*Dom Bonaventure.* No doubt, we do, and are meant to do. The Incarnation, among other great purposes, was a device of God to win the love of His creatures. I mean, not merely their obedience and submission, but their affective love.

*Mr. Croседale.* But is it not the fact that the affective love of the devout Christian is all concentrated upon the Humanity of Christ, so that Christ is loved as Man, not as God ? Of the multitudes who pray before a shrine of the Sacred Heart, how many have any affective love for God the Father ?

*Dom Bonaventure.* More than you suppose. God is loved in Jesus Christ. Those multitudes would not have that devotion to the Sacred Heart if they believed that Jesus Christ was anything less than God,—if they were Nestorians, for example, and believed that the Eternal Son was one person, and the Son of Mary another and inferior, and consequently that the Heart of Jesus was not the Heart of God. As to that interesting boyish experience of your own, we must fall back for an explanation upon that law of development, which unravels so many other difficulties.

*Mr. Croседale.* I may further say that the difficulty for me in my ordinary moods has since disappeared. I have read

somewhere that man is a polytheist at twelve, a monotheist at five-and-twenty : the meaning of which paradoxical saying I take to be that, with the advance of years, the towering majesty of God is better discerned, pervading heaven and earth, yet high above all. God has led me on to see a more fatherly aspect in Him. I revel in what I familiarly call His *bigness*, His infinity, immensity, and above all His eternity ; His encompassing presence, His mighty protection, His incomprehensibility, and the mystery that ever shrouds Him. Far away in that high mysterious region my hope penetrates to His desirable countenance, in the light of which I hope one day to live. *In lumine tuo videbimus lumen* (Ps. xxxii. 10). Oh if God were not so *big*, He would not satisfy me ! I love Him because He is my own *big God*, and good all over as He is great.

*Dom Bonaventure.* You have answered your own question. You have been led on by degrees. You began in a reign of terror, and have ended in a reign of love. There is the law of development for you. But as you will recognise, this development would never have had place had it not been for the mysteries of the Word Incarnate. Through the Babe of Bethlehem, through Christ Crucified, through the Holy Eucharist and the Sacred Heart, in which mysteries we know God in visible form, we are caught up and borne aloft to the love of God invisible. It is a mistake to talk much to a young person about loving God, or to use the language of divine love to any beginner in spiritual life, to any rude and ill-instructed soul. The truths that the beginner should first have impressed upon him are these,—that he has in God a Master, who sees all that he does, a Creator and Judge who will call him to account for every advantage bestowed upon him : that he has an immortal soul to save, heaven to win and hell to escape : and that in heaven or in hell he must dwell for eternity : that the grace of God, his passport to heaven, is lost by one mortal sin : that every such sin has to be repented of and confessed : *that there is one most high, almighty Creator, and powerful King and exceedingly to be feared, seated upon the throne of wisdom, all-ruling God* (Ecclus. i. 8). The sense of duty must precede

the affection of love. The one safe foundation for an emotional piety is conscientiousness : and the foundation-stone of conscientiousness is fear of the Lord.

*Mr. Croседale.* Would you then have a child's religion void of affection ?

*Dom Bonaventure.* Far from it. But I would have his religious affection centred on objects within his capacity, that is to say, on objects which his sense can grasp and his imagination portray. And what I say of a child, I say of every novice in spirituality, every neophyte in holiness.

*Mr. Croседale.* What sort of objects do you mean ?

*Dom Bonaventure.* Many years ago I kept Christmas at the house of a dear friend. One room I found fitted up with a Crib to represent the Cave of the Nativity. The little ones of the family talked of "Baby Jesus." In youth you should feed your devotion on "Baby Jesus," on the Crucifix, on the Blessed Sacrament, on the mysteries of the Rosary, on images of Holy Mary, on the singing of hymns and, if Plain Chant catches your ear, on Plain Chant. You should have what a sneering Protestant would call "a sensuous religion" : it is the only religion that you are capable of. When you are older, if your religious susceptibilities have been duly developed, and not otherwise, you will begin to feel some devotion for *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth* : and some young growth will appear in your soul of affection for your Father in heaven, as such.

*Mr. Croседale.* What you say, some will call a platitude, others an offensive novelty.

*Dom Bonaventure.* Between the two, I hope it is neither. I seem to find one grave authority on my side in the person of St. Ignatius Loyola. The First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* breathes of nothing but "finding the divine will in order to the saving of one's soul," "praise, reverence, and service of God," "shame and confusion and huge sorrow for sin." Those are the exercises and the meditations of a beginner. And



St. Ignatius is borne out by Cardinal Newman. Read for yourself his University Sermon "On Justice." What he said there as a young man, he re-affirmed in old age (See *Grammar of Assent*, p. 400, ed. 1895): "Its (religion's) large and deep foundation is the sense of sin and guilt, and without this sense there is for man, as he is, no genuine religion." Coming to the Second Week, which is eminently the Week for Christians, as the First is the Week for Theists, St. Ignatius bids his exercitant pray for "an inward (Newman's 'real') knowledge of the Lord, who for me has been made man, that I may love Him more." This is the first mention of any love of God in the Exercises. It is the love of God made man, a visible object, "Baby Jesus"; and this love of the Word Incarnate is asked for at the opening of each "contemplation" or artistic study, of the various scenes of His life, which studies of sensible objects make up the greater part of the Exercises. Only at the end and final crown of all, in the Fourth Week, do we arrive "to love and serve His Divine Majesty," *i.e.*, at the affective love of God as God.

*Mr. Crosedale.* I like your account of the matter, especially if it be Newman's and St. Ignatius's also. But it has this difficulty. According to you, the affective love of God is only possible through the Incarnation. How then do you explain the Jews under the Old Law being commanded to love God?

*Dom Bonaventure.* In this way, that the God whom they were commanded to love was Yahweh, their national Deity. The children of Israel were Yahweh's peculiar and chosen people. Jerusalem was His holy city, overshadowed by His temple. Read Deuteronomy xxvi. 17-19: *Thou hast chosen God to-day to be thy God, and to walk in all his ways . . . and the Lord hath chosen thee to-day to be to him a peculiar people . . . above all the nations, . . . a holy people to thy God.* A Jew loved God as he loved his country, for Yahweh was the source and centre of national greatness. Himself invisible and represented by no image, Yahweh's Temple was a stupendous object to the eye, and was the theatre of rites, visible and audible, that fired the imagination. All the surroundings of



Jerusalem spoke to a Jew of his God. *The mountains are about Jerusalem, and the Lord is about his people.* Nowhere is this sentiment more splendidly written than in these Gradual Psalms (Pss. cix-cxxxiii).

*Mr. Crosedale.* And, allow me to put in, nowhere in the Bible are such acts of the love of God inscribed as in the Book of Psalms.

*Dom Bonaventure.* You are right. And these acts of love, you will observe, are blended with references to the Temple and the services there performed. The Temple was to the Jews some sort of foreshadowing of the Incarnation. It was a Theophany, or manifestation of God amongst men. I think we understand how the Jew made his act of love of God.

*Mr. Crosedale.* Our discussion prompts my curiosity to this question : Is the affective love of God matter of commandment ? Was the Jew commanded, is the Christian commanded, to love God with a love of sentiment ? Or is it enough to have for God a practical preference, and in conduct to put God's service above every other consideration,—as the loyal Sikhs in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 put the cause of Queen Victoria before the cause of the Sepoy mutineers. I do not suppose the Sikhs had much glow of affection for the Power that had so recently subdued them, but they regarded the English *Sahib* as the best fighter in the land, and stood by him as one stands by the stronger.

*Dom Bonaventure.* Your question is not an easy one, and I would not be positive in my reply ; but the best that I can suggest is this. To every command and obligation there is a fringe or border of counsel. He who should discard all counsels, and fulfil merely his strict obligation, might be called in some sort "just," but he would not be admirable : he could not stand as a model for our imitation. A religious, for instance, who should do exactly what he was commanded in virtue of his vow of obedience, and would pay no further compliance than that to his Superior's wishes, would not be a man according to the heart of St. Ignatius, or St. Francis, or St. Dominic.

*Mr. Crosedale.* Those Saints would not have kept such a man in their company.

*Dom Bonaventure.* So I would make the affective love of God a sort of fringe, or counsel, attached to the commandment of charity, but not formally and precisely included therein. Affection seems hardly a matter of commandment. Charity resides essentially in the will, not in the feelings: now, by the grace of God, we can always command our will, but not even by the aid of grace can we always command our feelings. An element that we cannot command cannot be made the matter of a command to us. A sailor may be commanded to brave the storm, but not to still the waves or raise the wind. When, then, we are commanded to make an act of charity, it is with our will that we are commanded to make it, not with our feeling.

*Mr. Crosedale.* But if affective love lies in feeling, and feeling is beyond the control of will, it appears that affective love cannot be matter of counsel either: for counsel, equally with command, is addressed to the will.

*Dom Bonaventure.* The will can influence the affections remotely, by opening gates to them, *e.g.*, by choosing to witness some pathetic drama, to listen to some moving preacher, or read a loving Saint's Life. In his *Spiritual Exercises* (Annotation 7), St. Ignatius would have his exercitant exhorted "to prepare and dispose himself for consolation to come."

*Mr. Crosedale.* But how about the act of charity made with the will: can you describe to me what sort of an act it would be?

*Dom Bonaventure.* I take it to be an act of preference, whereby we prefer God above all things, because we recognise Him to be our best good, the possession of Him our final happiness, and the doing of His will our most proper function.

*Mr. Crosedale.* That is certainly going beyond the ordinary dispositions of Sikh or Sepoy towards the British Government . . . I want, before I go away, to ask you whether you think the precept of Deuteronomy vi. 5, referred to and confirmed by

our Saviour, to be in substance any other than that given in Exodus xx. 3, which makes the first commandment of the Decalogue.

*Dom Bonaventure.* Reading the context, Deut. vi. 2-5, and comparing it with Exodus, I have no doubt that one and the same commandment is given in both places. Yahweh is the one true God, and in a singular manner the God of Israel: He will brook no rival: idols must be cast out, and He is to be supreme. What is commanded is the recognition of the peerless supremacy of Yahweh.

*Mr. Crosedale.* May not that be a trembling recognition, rather the service of fear than any inward devotion of heart and will? *When he went about to slay them, they sought him, and came back, and turned to him in the morning* (Ps. lxxvii).

*Dom Bonaventure.* Go on with the quotation.

*Mr. Crosedale.* *And they loved him with their mouth, but their heart was not right with him.*

*Dom Bonaventure.* Turning to Mark vii. 6, you find the Lawgiver of the New Law making such service a reproach. Still your Psalm continues, *But he is merciful.* God, it seems, is content to take from men what they for the nonce can give. Some yield Him a fitful observance of His law in their outward behaviour, on the occasions when their hearts are stricken with His fear; and not much more, perhaps, can be expected of them as they stand. But as they and their posterity grow more proficient in exterior observance, haply His Holy Spirit will spread abroad in their hearts something of His love, and this in greater abundance when they come to receive baptism and other Christian sacraments (Romans v. 5; viii. 15). Then looking in spirit upon the human face of their Divine Redeemer, not their *heart* and will only, but their very *flesh* and feeling at times may *exult with love and felt desire for the living God* (Ps. lxxxiii. 3).



## CONVERSATION VIII

### MATRIMONY

*Mr. Costys.* I have got some matrimonial difficulties.

*Dom Joachim (in alarm).* Really? Have you brought her with you? I do not know that this Abbey was founded to mediate——

*Mr. Costys.* Nay, I have not fallen out with my wife. My difficulties happily are not practical but theoretical. For the life of me I cannot see how matrimony ever came to rank as a sacrament. I used to think that the priest administered the sacrament of matrimony to the bride and bridegroom when they came before him, he saying to them, *I join you in holy matrimony*, or words to that effect. Now I find I was mistaken.

*Dom Joachim.* Of course you were. The priest is not the minister of matrimony, nor ever can be: the diriment impediment of Order lies in his way. The sacrament of matrimony is the contract of marriage between two baptised persons, man and woman; and the ministers of the sacrament are the two contracting parties. They administer it to one another the instant they make a valid contract, whereby the one becomes husband and the other wife.

*Mr. Costys.* And the priest?

*Dom Joachim.* His presence is a condition, always necessary for the lawfulness of the contract, and, by later legislation, for its validity also among Catholics.

*Mr. Costys.* So I have been told. But considering the definition of a sacrament which I learnt as a child in my



catechism : “ an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by Christ, whereby grace is conveyed to our souls ” ; I am quite unable to fit that definition on to the contract whereby Titius takes Bertha for his wedded wife to have and to hold for better or worse till death.

*Dom Joachim.* Your difficulty may be formulated in four questions :

- (a) Where is the outward sign in the marriage contract ?
- (b) What inward grace does that sign signify ?
- (c) How was that sign ordained by Christ ?
- (d) What grace does it convey to our souls ?

Questions (a) and (d) need not detain us long. Like any other contract among mankind, the contract of marriage must be expressed by outward sign,—word, or gesture, or writing. How otherwise shall the contracting parties understand one another ? In a contract, the engagement must be made on one side, and accepted on the other, which supposes a mutual understanding arrived at by some interchange of signs. Apart from positive legislation (the binding force and source of which in this matter I do not for the present examine), any mutually understood signs are sufficient to express the contract, and therefore to constitute the sacrament of matrimony. As for the graces conveyed by matrimony, they are as those conveyed by the other six sacraments. There is, first, an increase of sanctifying grace to such as receive the sacrament worthily.

*Mr. Costys.* What do you mean by “ worthily ” ?

*Dom Joachim.* I mean in this case “ not being in the state of mortal sin.”

*Mr. Costys.* So the Christian who gets married in mortal sin profanes a sacrament and commits a sacrilege.

*Dom Joachim.* Yes, if he knows what he is about. Secondly, there is conferred a title to actual graces, graces to be bestowed from time to time according to the emergencies of married life. Now you will wish to know (c) what inward grace is signified

by a contract of marriage duly expressed and understood between one Christian and another.

*Mr. Costys.* I do much wish to know that.

*Dom Joachim.* Are you quite clear on this point, that the sacrament of matrimony is not the marriage act, not the act proper to the procreation of children, but the marriage contract, or contract whereby the two parties bind themselves one to another for all future time in order to the performance of that act?

*Mr. Costys.* Yes, I understand that. Titius and Bertha must first be married before they can exercise marital and uxorial rights, and not be accounted fornicators. That is just my difficulty,—how can a contract in order to the discharge of the merest of animal functions ever possibly be a sign of inward grace?

*Dom Joachim.* Eating and drinking are likewise the merest of animal functions; and yet the greatest of sacraments exists in the order of eating and drinking. *While they were eating, he took bread and gave it to them, and said, This is my body: and taking a cup he gave it to them, and they all drank thereof; and he said to them, This is my blood* (Mark xiv. 22-24).

*Mr. Costys.* I confess, you have me there. There is a mystery about human generation as about human nutrition. Neither one process nor the other stops short at the animal stage, or the stage that is described by the biologist and is watched over by the physician. In all essential processes of nature there is some remote enactment and shadowy bodying forth of things divine.

*Dom Joachim.* Yes, mystery means symbolism. Symbolism, mystery and modesty, all three hang together. With a high esteem of physical science, I can form but a low estimate of the man to whom physical science says the last thing that is to be said of the works of nature. What we call "nature," the object of our sensory experiences, is, I suppose, the veil of high

realities, and the type of realities higher still. Vulgarly, they say, is a kind of limitation. The mind of the positivist and utilitarian, as I see it, is very limited, and therefore very vulgar,—vulgar, because it is shallow and at the same time blindly confident, refusing to see its own limitations. But this by the way. It suggests, however, a consideration much to my purpose. There are plenty of utilitarian arguments against infidelity in married persons and incontinence in the unmarried. But none of these arguments bear out either in intensity or in extension the denouncements which a healthy conscience utters against adultery and all forms of impurity. To warrant those denouncements, there must be at the back of them some further argument of a higher than utilitarian character. This argument is forthcoming in our doctrine of symbolism. The matrimonial union, the marriage act, and the special organism that ministers to that act, are symbols of something else, vastly more exalted, heavenly, and eternal. What that something is I will presently endeavour in some sort to show. Consequently any violation of the order of nature in this department of human conduct is not merely inimical to the *physique* of the individual, prejudicial to the healthiness of the race, destructive of the peace of families, and the like ; it is also a violation of a sacred symbolism, and an outrage upon the things symbolised, things sacred and divine. This view I got from an old book, published early in last century. May I read you the passage ?

*Mr. Costys.* Do by all means.

*Dom Joachim.* “ Certain actions are wrong, because in them some type is violated, some sacred symbolism outraged, and the dishonour done to the type redounds upon the anti-type or thing typified. Such I conceive to be the radical reason of the grievousness of sins against purity. There are hygienic reasons for that virtue, as there are for abstinence and sobriety. But the hygienic reason for purity is never the whole reason ; it does not cover the entire ground and matter of the virtue . . . It fails to account for the peculiar sacredness of the precept, and the damning wickedness of all serious violation of

the same. It is not so very important as all that, to have a reverent care of our health. By heroic exercise of the love of God and of his neighbour, a man may wear out his body more speedily and more ruinously than by a life of dissipation. The mischief and malice of such a life is not simply its unhealthiness, nor its undoing of character, nor even its uselessness and injury to the race, but further its offending against the symbolism of things mighty and holy." (*Political and Moral Essays*, by Joseph Rickaby, pp. 287-289. Benziger, 1902.)

*Mr. Costys.* That is very suggestive. Let me see the book. No doubt long out of print?

*Dom Joachim.* This is the only copy that I have seen. Let me now go on to say what high and holy reality I take to be symbolised by the matrimonial union, and by the provision of nature which is specially subservient thereto. Here I will not mock you with phantoms conjured up by my own inventiveness. Pray take this New Testament, and read with me Ephesians v. 25-33. You see a series of antitheses. Let us tabulate them in two columns.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Husband and wife.  | 1. Christ and His Church.  |
| 2. The bathing-vessel, containing water for the bride to bathe in, to make her clean and acceptable to her husband.   | 2. The water of baptism, hallowed by the word of Christ for the cleansing of the faithful from sin. (Matrimony a sacrament only among the baptised.)                     |
| 3. Water, of its own natural power cleansing the body.  | 3. Water of baptism, cleansing the soul in virtue of the Blood of Christ, <i>who gave Himself up for her</i> (His Bride).  |
| 4. The bride emerging from the bath in <i>glorious</i> beauty, <i>without spot or wrinkle, ready</i> for her husband. | 4. The Church,—and each faithful soul, a component of the Church,—coming forth from baptism, <i>glorious, holy and without blemish</i> , ready to be united with Christ. |

5. The nuptial union, *two in one flesh*, so that *in loving his wife a man loves himself*, and what he renders to her may be said still to remain to him.

5. The union of sanctifying grace between Christ and His Church, so that Christ and His Church are one, the Church being a sort of extension (πλήρωμα i. 23) of His Humanity, *for we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bone* (v. 30).

*Mr. Costys.* It does not do to eke out a comparison too curiously ; else I might object that the soul fresh-cleansed in baptism is not simply “ ready to be united with Christ ” ; it is actually united with Him by sanctifying grace.

*Dom Joachim.* That is true, yet there remains the prospect of a further and more perfect union. After baptism in those days First Communion was administered immediately : that Eucharistic union, for which baptism is the necessary preparation, may not have been quite absent from the Apostle’s mind. To be precise, Christ is united with His Church and with humanity in three ways :

1. By the incarnation, which unites the Son of God in unity of one person with one definite Humanity, Body and Soul : this union is everlasting and indissoluble.

2. By the sanctifying grace of baptism : this union may be lost, and is lost, by the individual Christian who commits mortal sin, but it can never be lost by the entire body of Christians all falling into sin together : in other words, the union is dissoluble in the individual Christian so long as he lives on earth ; it is indissoluble in the corporate body of Christians, the Universal Church, even on earth. As I have said, and as St. Paul and St. Augustine continually insist, the Church is thus the *extension*, or *complement*, πλήρωμα, of the Sacred Humanity.

3. By heavenly glory, which is the attainment of the vision of God. This union is indissoluble both in regard of the Universal Church Triumphant and in regard of every individual member of the same.



These varieties of union are all variously symbolised in the marriage contract between two baptised persons: therefore *this mystery, i.e., the mystery, or symbolic significance of that contract, is great, I mean as pointing to Christ and the Church.* Such I take to be the sense of Ephesians v. 32.

*Mr. Costys.* I see you do not argue that matrimony is a sacrament on the mere strength of our Rheims version, *This is a great sacrament.*

*Dom Joachim.* No, nor do I regard that as the happiest of all possible versions. Now to revert to the four questions in which your difficulty was formulated, we are in a position finally to dispose of questions (b) and (d). The axiom is fundamental in the treatise on the Sacraments: *Sacramenta efficiunt quod significant*, "Sacraments effect what they signify." The matrimonial contract of the baptised signifies the union of Christ with humanity and the Church, it signifies the incarnation and the consequent bestowal of sanctifying grace and ultimately of heavenly glory upon the members of the Church, as being *members of Christ* (1 Cor. vi. 15). The sacrament of matrimony, then, which is the said matrimonial contract, must effect in the recipients this union of Christ which it signifies; that is to say, it must work in them an augmentation of sanctifying grace.

*Mr. Costys.* Question (c) still stands waiting for an answer; "How was that sign ordained by Christ?"

*Dom Joachim.* Thank you, I had not forgotten, but almost wished it had slipped your memory; for that is the hardest inquiry of all. I may begin by laying it down as a position fairly tenable, that Christ and His Holy Spirit instructed the Apostles in the spiritual significance of marriage. That I argue as well from the passage of Ephesians already explained, as also from the Apocalypse xxi. 1-10: *I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from God, arrayed as a bride adorned for her husband . . . Come, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb . . . and he showed me the holy city.* I find no such language in the gospels. It may have been one of the things which the Apostles *were not able to bear now,*

in the mortal life of their Master; part of that *full truth* to which the *Spirit of truth* guided them after the Ascension (John xvi. 12, 13).

*Mr. Costys.* That I would grant: but to point a thing out as significant of grace and sanctification is not the same thing as to constitute it a cause of grace and sanctification. That crucifix on the wall signifies the forgiveness of sin, but does not cause it as sacramental absolution does. Clearly it is a part of the Christian revelation, published by St. Paul and St. John, that the marriage contract is a symbol, a type, an emblem, of the union of Christ with His Church, collectively and individually. But did St. Paul recognise, did Christ or the Spirit of Christ in the first age definitely teach, that the sanctification conferred in baptism is augmented in two baptised persons by a contract of marriage between them?

*Dom Joachim.* That is a plain and pertinent question. It deserves a plain and pertinent answer, and you shall have one. I do not know.

*Mr. Costys.* How then? You do not know whether matrimony was ordained by Christ as a sign significant and causative of sanctifying grace? You are not certain that Christ instituted the sacrament of matrimony? Is that what you mean?

*Dom Joachim.* I am certain that Christ instituted the sacrament of matrimony, that He made the marriage contract between the baptised to be at once significant and effective of sanctifying grace. That I know by the teaching of the Church. But I am not sure that He made the institution so clear and explicit that the early generation of Christians generally understood as explicitly as you and I do both what a sacrament is, and that matrimony is a sacrament. I am not sure, but I am inclined to think He did not.

*Mr. Costys.* Ho, ho, development of doctrine again!

*Dom Joachim.* That is just it. I do not know, and, it seems to me, none of us ever will know in this world adequately,

the bounds to be set to development. If the Apostles had written out all their mind in the books of the New Testament, we might safely argue that whatever was not explicit there, and still was explicitly taught by the modern Church, was in its explicitness a fruit of development. But now the Apostles have not written in the New Testament all that they knew (John xxi. 25; Apoc. x. 4). Nor are the literature and historical memorials of the first ages so abundant and so clear as to enable us to formulate perfectly the whole Creed explicitly held and confessed by the Antenicene Fathers. But though we cannot say precisely of every given article of faith what elements of it were explicit from the first, and what were opened out and developed as new questions arose in the course of ages, still we may affirm with certainty that development, under the ever-present guidance of the Holy Spirit forming the mind of the Church, has had much to say to the Catholic Creed as laid down in the Councils of Trent and Vatican. I am apt to think that the doctrine of matrimony being a sacrament is a developed doctrine, and was not explicit in St. Paul's confession of faith, or in that of his great expositor, St. John Chrysostom. About St. Paul, however, I speak with reserve. No one knows what were the *secret words* which he heard when he was *caught up to paradise* (2 Cor. xii. 4).

*Mr. Costys.* You relieve my mind of a great burden by your bringing in of development of doctrine.

*Dom Joachim.* Thank Cardinal Newman for that. But much remains to be done. Oh that some great theologian would arise to exploit and push and likewise to limit Newman's conclusions! Of moderns who have handled the subject of development, some are too timid, others I think too venturesome and hasty. And after all, as I have said, the exact part played by development can never be minutely mapped out for want of historical data. Those old doctors of the first five centuries, I suspect, thought and saw a good deal further than they cared to set down in writing.

There is one modern,—or to speak more plainly, Modernist,—view of development which I emphatically disclaim. It is

that, after our Lord's departure from this world, His doctrine in the minds of His followers took shapes and assumed proportions which He had neither intended nor even foreseen. I admit no development of doctrine but that which was foreseen and intended by Christ, the God-Man, while He was on earth, and has since been guided by His Spirit.

*Mr. Costys.* But for development we require germs. We are no believers in spontaneous generation. What germs of the notion of matrimony ranking as a sacrament side by side with baptism can you discover in the New Testament and in the Fathers?

*Dom Joachim.* The most important, and a very definitely pronounced germ, is that which we have already examined in the fifth chapter of Ephesians. Matrimony was taken as a chief and conspicuous emblem of the relation of man to God which was set up by the Incarnation. The Canticle of Canticles, or Song of Solomon, attracted attention as expressive of this symbolism. Indeed, the symbolic aspect of Christian marriage was as clearly discerned in the first century as it is in the twentieth, and engaged even more attention than it does now.

*Mr. Costys.* In our materialistic age it is hardly thought of by the majority of the faithful at all. In the world at large it is wholly ignored except by a few mystics and poets, such as Coventry Patmore.

*Dom Joachim.* Hence the sad spectacle of Christians marrying almost as heathens are represented marrying in the plays of Aristophanes, and living bitterly to regret a state, the graces of which they flung aside at the outset. The *symbolic* character of Christian matrimony is clearly marked from the first. Its *effective* power of conferring grace is not marked with the clearness which Cardinal Bellarmine might have expected, but which Cardinal Newman has taught us to do without and not be surprised at its non-appearance. I should call a germ of recognition of the effective grace-giving power of Christian matrimony any testimony to this effect, that as baptism is an entrance on a state of holiness, so is the marriage



of the baptised an entrance on a further state of holiness : that man is consecrated to God in baptism, and Christian man is once more consecrated to God when he plights his troth to Christian woman. The holiness of sanctifying grace consists in a peculiar consecration and dedication of soul and body to God in Jesus Christ. A further dedication, then, is an increase of holiness. Marriage between two baptised persons is such a further dedication. Christian matrimony, therefore, of its own nature adds to the holiness of baptism. Therefore, Christ so willing and ordaining, matrimony is a sacrament.

*Mr. Costys.* All that you say is in keeping with modern theology, but where do you find it recognised in the Fathers? Myself I have looked in vain for any such recognition. The other day I took down Tertullian, and found him busy on the marriage question, now arguing against the Marcionites that marriage is not a forbidden thing, now exhorting his wife not to marry again after his death : but of a Christian becoming holier by getting married, Tertullian seemed to have no conception.

*Dom Joachim.* I think he would have told you that a Christian is more bound to holiness for being married. He would have told you that the marriage contract is a sacred thing. The Jews recognised it for such : so did the more religious-minded of the pagans. We may presume that the early Christian did not fall short of the pagan and the Jew. St. Paul wrote : *The unbelieving husband is sanctified in the (Christian) wife* (1 Cor. vii. 14). Might he not have written, in a far fuller sense of the word *sanctified* : *The believing husband is sanctified in the believing wife*? I think he might and would have said so. I argue so, upon the following consideration. A striking point of St. Paul's teaching is the sanctity of the body of the Christian. *Your bodies are members of Christ. Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. The temple of God is holy, which ye are. Ye are Christ's. The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. He will transform the body of our humiliation, conforming it to the body of his glory. Reflecting the glory of the Lord, we are trans-*



*formed into the same likeness from glory to glory. Ye are risen with Christ. Present your limbs as servants to justice unto sanctification. Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God* (1 Cor. iii. 17, 23 ; vi. 13, 15, 19, 20 ; 2 Cor. iii. 18 ; Col. iii. 1 ; Eph. iii. 21 ; Rom. vi. 19 ; xii. 1). Upon such texts I argue as follows. If the body of the Christian is holy, Christian marriage is the conjunction of two holy things, *sancta sanctis*. If baptism is the dedication of the temple of God, matrimony is the enlargement of that temple, as though two consecrated churches were thrown into one : *so they are no longer two but one flesh*, says our Lord (Matt. xix. 6). If the body of the Christian is *for the Lord*, then *to the Lord* it is given in holy matrimony. As He possessed it in baptism, and has many times possessed it in Holy Communion, so in matrimony He amplifies, validates, renews that possession. All this doctrine is summed up in two words of St. Paul, *she is free to marry whom she will, only in the Lord* (1 Cor. vii. 39), where the commentators rightly explain those two words, *in Domino*, "let her, Christian woman as she is, get herself a Christian husband," *i.e.*, let her marriage be the sacrament of matrimony.

*Mr. Costys.* I must digest this doctrine by a more careful reading of the Pauline Epistles. You have given me good food for thought. Undoubtedly there are truths which penetrate the mind, not through a series of smart syllogisms, but as the soaking dew, wetting and refreshing the soul in the course of a wide and meditative survey of facts and documents.

## CONVERSATION IX

### HISTORICAL SCANDALS

*Mr. Elbanks.* I come fresh from the reading of Bishop Creighton's six volumes on the History of the Papacy ; and my mind is on fire with grief and indignation at the luxury of Clement VI, the ferocity of Urban VI, the avarice of Boniface IX, the nepotism of Sixtus IV, the unspeakable infamy of Alexander VI. You champions of the Catholic faith are like generals, who resist a frontal attack, and are taken unawares in flank. When will you learn that the quarrel of England with Rome is political and historical rather than theological ; that the men who scowl at the Catholic priest in the streets, and mutter as they pass him by, have not Hegel on the brain, nor even Darwin, but their thoughts are taken up with the iniquities of the Papacy in the days when it ruled the earth ? Study history, if you want to disarm prejudice and to make converts. Show how it is possible for a Church still to be the Church of Christ, that has been ruled vicariously in His name by such Pontiffs as some that I have mentioned, such Prelates, such priests, such corruption !

*Dom Roderick.* I agree with you : history has created against us prejudices that we too little allow for ; and fiction has eked out history still further to our disadvantage. We bear the iniquities of our fathers, and the stench of them is in the nostrils of learned and unlearned alike.

*Mr. Elbanks.* Let us leave alone, if you please, the fictions that deceive the unlearned. Just listen to a sober historical page like the following :

“ On January 11, 1385, he (Urban VI) called to a consistory

the six Cardinals whom he most suspected: his nephew Butillo seized them, and cast them into a loathsome dungeon made in a broken cistern. The Pope accused them of a plot to seize his person, compel him to confess himself to be a heretic and then burn him. They were left in their horrible dungeon to suffer from cold, hunger, and loathsome reptiles. Dietrich of Niem, who was sent to examine them, gives us an account of their sufferings and of the Pope's vindictive fury. It was in vain that the unhappy men pleaded their innocence; in vain Dietrich of Niem entreated the Pope to be merciful. Urban's face glowed with anger like a lamp, and his throat grew hoarse with furious maledictions. The accused were dragged before a consistory and were urged to confess; when they still pleaded innocence, they were again plunged into their dungeon. Three days after, they were submitted to torture, elderly and infirm as many of them were. The brutal Butillo stood by and laughed at their sufferings, while the Pope himself walked in a garden outside, listening . . . to their shrieks of agony, and reading his hours from the Breviary in a loud voice. . . . The captive Cardinals he refused to let go even in his flight. The horse on which one of them, the Bishop of Aquila, was mounted went lame; whereon Urban ordered the Bishop to be put to death, and his corpse was left unburied by the roadside." (Creighton, *History of the Papacy*, I, pp. 91, 94.)

*Dom Roderick.* The last historian that I have read on this period, a Catholic, considers that Urban VI in the later acts of his pontificate was out of his mind. Still, in itself it is a sad story; and there are others in other ways bad too.

*Mr. Elbanks.* The line taken by some Catholic apologists is that these stories are disedifying and therefore cannot be true.

*Dom Roderick.* A Catholic is reluctant to believe them true, and will not accept them except upon sufficient evidence. But upon no principle of his faith can he argue *a priori* that they cannot be true; and the evidence for some of them is all too convincing. They bring to my mind what an old priest once said to me: "God cannot place you in any position in this

world, in which you may not damn yourself, if you choose." A man may work out his own damnation while occupying the papal chair. In a book called, I think, *Speculum Exemplorum*, I once read a private revelation to this effect, that Our Lady had obtained by her prayers from her Divine Son that no one of His Vicars should ever be lost, but that the whole line of Roman Pontiffs should stand at His right hand at the last day. In that case a privilege has been granted to the Papacy which was not granted to the College of Apostles.

*Mr. Elbanks.* I could wish it were so, but the life and death of more than one occupant of the Papal Chair makes me very dubious of the revelation. For myself, I have always felt a singular difficulty in believing in the salvation of any man who has done much harm to the Catholic Church. And some Popes have injured the Church grievously, and created scandals which are not even yet appeased.

*Dom Roderick.* In his private life, and even in his official conduct, a Pope may sin like Judas, and misgovern the Church as Judas betrayed his Master, even though he do not share the final impenitence of Judas. The promises of Christ to St. Peter and the Papacy regard primarily the doctrinal teaching of the Holy See. Never shall Pope, acting as Pope, or Universal Shepherd, lead the whole Church into heresy. That at least Alexander VI was as far from doing as St. Leo or St. Gregory. Nay, taking the whole line of them, we may truly say that the Popes have well deserved the appellation of "Your Holiness." There has been found no dynasty like them for keeping the law of the Most High. No, Sir, as Dr. Johnson would say, if there had been as few bad Kings as there have been bad Popes, this would have been a much happier world.

*Mr. Elbanks.* Nevertheless one bad Pope is a greater scandal than three bad Kings.

*Dom Roderick.* When I am troubled about the scandals of history, I take down Volume IX of the great Maurist edition of the works of St. Augustine. It contains his controversies with the Donatists. The Donatist schism, you remember, began

in a fit of virtuous indignation against the consecration of a certain Bishop of Carthage, whose consecrator, it was said, through fear had surrendered the Sacred Books to a pagan persecutor. Like those primitive Separatists, the Pharisees, whom our Lord rebuked, the Donatists would hold no communion with sinners. They separated accordingly, and formed a community in which all were to be saints, a community which came to number in its ranks many dangerous fanatics, people who in our days would have ended their career either on the gallows or in an asylum. Here, first thing in *Augustini Opera*, tom. ix., stands a "Psalm against the party of Donatus," the only poetry, so far as I know, that we have from the pen of St. Augustine, who, like other writers of brilliant rhetorical prose, was not much of a poet. Let us read some of it together.

Abundance of sins is wont to trouble the brethren,  
Therefore Our Lord has willed to warn us beforehand,  
Comparing the Kingdom of Heaven to a net cast into the sea,  
Gathering many fishes, every sort, on this side and on that.  
When they had drawn them to the shore, then they began the  
separation.

The good they cast into vessels, the bad they rejected into the sea.  
Whoever knows the gospel, let him recognise this parable with fear.  
He sees the net, the Church : he sees this world, the sea.  
The mingled kind of fish is the just with the sinner.  
The end of the world is the shore : then is the time of separation.  
When they (the Donatists) broke the nets, they showed a great love  
for the sea (the world).

The vessels are the abodes of the saints, whither *they* cannot attain.

Let us see what fact has neccssitated the setting up of altar against altar.

If a priest was bad, he should have been deposed long ago ;  
If he could not be deposed, he should have been tolerated within the  
net.

Do not any longer, brethren, impute to us the faults of the time of  
Macarius (Urban VI).

If they were cruel, to us also their cruelties are very displeasing.



But if what is said of them is false, God is able to judge.

Let us love the peace of Christ, let us rejoice in unity.

If there are any evil persons in the Church, they cannot prejudice us.

If they cannot be with us, let them be shut out without breach of peace.

If they cannot be shut out, let them at least be shut out from the heart.

. . . . .

What think ye? The second harvest of the Church,

That grows all the world over, must endure much.

For it has the Lord's example even in the case of the traitor Judas.

Him He endured among the good, him He sent even to preach.

A wicked servant preached, but Christ was the object of faith;

Because they who believed the judge cared nothing for the crier  
who published the sentence.

. . . . .

What if the Church herself were now to address you with offer of peace,

And say, O my children, why do you complain of your mother?

. . . . .

What have I done to you, your mother all the world over?

I expel the wicked, whom I can expel; and those whom I cannot,  
I am compelled to bear.

I bear them until they be healed, or be cut off in the end.

*Mr. Elbanks.* I have got St. Augustine at home; and, when I return, I will copy out this psalm and use it as a book-mark in Creighton's *History of the Papacy*.\*

*Dom Roderick.* God cares very little about most of what is printed in the daily papers, or figures in the pages of history. God cares for the salvation of souls. The world is to Him as a great quarry, out of which He hews His elect. Election and sanctification are hidden processes. Year by year fresh spirits of the just are made perfect in heaven; and saints in the making are further sanctified on earth, or, if need be, converted. When God has got His tale of saints complete, He will come

\* See the Latin of these extracts at the end of the Conversation.

in judgment. His angels will *separate the wicked from the midst of the just* (Matt. xiii. 49), however numerous these wicked ones may have been, and however high-placed, even in God's sanctuary : for from the sanctuary judgment is to begin (Ezech. ix. 6). *God is no respecter of persons* (Acts x. 34). When a river is frozen over, you see the ice and snow above, and men upon it careering as upon dry land : you do not see the river stream still going its perennial way beneath. The elect are as *waters that go softly* (Is. viii. 6), on the way to heaven. And the elect are of all ages, even of times of utmost scandal.

*Mr. Elbanks.* Thank God, those times of scandal are past.

*Dom Roderick.* Yes, whatever future may await the Church, whatever defeats, whatever triumphs, one thing is certain, the circumstances of the later Mediæval Papacy can never return.

*Mr. Elbanks.* And are not wanted back.

## NOTE I

Extracts from the *Psalmus contra partem Donati.*

*Abundantia peccatorum solet fratres conturbare :  
Propter hoc Dominus noster voluit nos præmonere,  
Comparans regnum coelorum reticulo misso in mare,  
Congreganti multos pisces, omne genus, hinc et inde :  
Quos cum traxissent ad littus, tunc coeperunt separare,  
Bonos in vasa miserunt, reliquos malos in mare.  
Quisquis novit evangelium, recognoscat cum timore.  
Videt reticulum Ecclesiam, videt hoc saeculum mare.  
Genus autem mixtum piscis justus est cum peccatore.  
Saeculi finis est littus, tunc est tempus separare.  
Quando retia ruperunt, multum dilexerunt mare.  
Vasa sunt sedes sanctorum, quo non possunt pervenire.*

. . . . .

*Videamus quae res coegit fieri altare contra altare.  
 Si malus erat Sacerdos, deponendus erat ante :  
 Si non poterat deponi, tolerandus intra rete.*

*Nolite nobis jam, fratres, tempus Macarii imputare.  
 Si crudeles erant illi, et nobis displicent valde :  
 Si autem falsa de illis dicunt, Deus potest judicare.  
 Nos amemus pacem Christi, gaudeamus in unitate.  
 Si qui mali sunt in Ecclesia, nil nobis possunt nocere.  
 Si non possunt nobiscum esse, excludantur salva pace :  
 Si non poterunt excludi, excludantur vel de corde.*

*Quid vobis ad haec videtur? Secunda messis Ecclesiae,  
 Quae per totum orbem crescit, plura debet sustinere.  
 Habet enim Domini exemplum et in Juda proditore.  
 Hunc inter bonos ferebat, hunc misit et praedicare.  
 Malus servus praedicabat, sed Christus erat in fide ;  
 Quia qui iudici credebant non curabant de praecone.*

*Quid si ipsa nunc Ecclesia vos alloquatur cum pace,  
 Et dicat, O filii mei, quid querimini de matre?*

*Sed quid ego vobis feci, vestra mater in toto orbe?  
 Expello malos quos possum, quos non possum cogor ferre :  
 Fero illos donec sanentur, aut separentur in fine.*

## NOTE II

*A Pope's judgment on his predecessors.*

“ We confess that God permits this persecution to fall upon His Church on account of sins, especially of priests and prelates. We know that in this Holy See for some years past there have been many abominations, abuses in spiritual matters, excesses in commands, and that all things have been changed to evil. Nor is it wonderful that the sickness has passed from the head to the members, from the Pope to inferior prelates.” Brief of Adrian VI to the Diet of Nürnberg, November 25th, 1522, quoted in Creighton's *History of the Papacy*, VI, 257-8.



## CONVERSATION X

### OMNIPOTENCE, NO ARBITRARY RULE\*

*Mr. Tresacre.* I was talking the other day with a man of eminence who made difficulties about the goodness and onnipotence of God in view of the vast evils that beset the universe. I urged that God's omnipotence was conditioned, not by anything outside Himself, but by His own very being and essence as imitable in possible creation: that one mode of imitation in created existence included another, and excluded a third: that thus there were natural implications and natural impossibilities: and that a world full of men, without much evil going about among them, might be, for all we could tell, a natural impossibility, as much beyond the power of the Creator to produce as a round triangle. He put his hands into his pockets and looked at me for a moment, and then said: "Oh, I see, you say that the Creator is Almighty in this sense, not that His power is unlimited, but that He has all the power that there is anywhere available. That I should call 'a constitutional God.' I admit that my complaints on the subject of evil cease under this hypothesis of 'a constitutional God.' "

*Dom Hincmar.* Your friend was evidently no Catholic Doctor of Divinity: nor would our theologians fall in with his phraseology. Besides, the phrase "constitutional God" is already preoccupied, and the notion that it stands for rightly reprobated. Let me read you Newman, *Idea of a University*,

\* The reader will find much of this speculation, touching the problem of evil, repeated in *Studies on God and His Creatures*, Study VI, *Shall there be evil in the city?* The two essays were written at a considerable interval of time. I crave indulgence for the repetition, in view of the interest of the problem and the desire of the fullest attainable clearness in the solution.



p. 38, ed. 1910 : " If you have changed the divine sovereignty into a sort of constitutional monarchy, in which the Throne has honour and ceremonial enough, but cannot issue the most ordinary command except through legal forms and precedents, and with the counter-signature of a minister, then belief in God is no more than an act of acknowledgment of existing sensible powers and phenomena, which none but an idiot can deny." He adds : " Such ideas of religion seem to me short of Monotheism." A " constitutional God " in this sense would be the mere executive of the laws of nature. Nature would be all in all : miracles would be an impossibility, and the supernatural order : the very idea of a free creative act would disappear : the conception of a Personal God would give place to a Pantheist Monism : nay, the supposition of there being a God at all might be voted to be, what someone has called it already, " an otiose hypothesis " : Let us hear no more of the " constitutional God." But there is a contrary error, equally pernicious, that of taking divine omnipotence for a power of sheer arbitrary action.

*Mr. Tresacre.* I have come across this line of an incomplete poem :

Omnipotence, no arbitrary rule.

*Dom Hincmar.* Very well expressed. I am grateful to the bard. If you please, we will proceed with the development of his idea in prose.

*Mr. Tresacre.* That is what I am come for.

*Dom Hincmar.* I find these five elements :

1. The omnipotence of God ;
2. The benevolence of God in regard of man ;
3. Human wickedness in this world, extended into the next ;
4. Human suffering in this world, likewise extended into the next ;
5. The portentous magnitude of the four above-mentioned " quantities," if we may call them so.

*Mr. Tresacre.* You will have a pretty task to blend all these elements together.

*Dom Hincmar.* Yet somehow they must be blended, for they actually do go together. God alone sees the reasonableness and consistence of the combination : any theory of mine on the subject must be imperfect in the extreme.

*Mr. Tresacre.* Let us set to work, expecting only imperfect results.

*Dom Hincmar.* And let critics observe and remember the modesty of our prospectus. I begin with Omnipotence. Duns Scotus, and after him Ockham and Bradwardine, three mediæval Oxford doctors, are credited with the teaching that all the distinctions of things, and all their inter-relations, are due to the arbitrary will of God. Thus God has made two and two four, when they might have been five : He has made lying a vice and chastity a virtue, when they might have been the other way about : He has forbidden two parallel straight lines to enclose the space which they might have enclosed.

*Mr. Tresacre.* I am unable to believe that these three great men, or any other sane person, ever taught anything quite so absurd.

*Dom Hincmar.* Nay, the doctrine has been taught more or less explicitly, though I would willingly see Scotus cleared of it. On such a conception of omnipotence it seems to me impossible "to vindicate the ways of God to man." If God could this instant change all the devils into rapt adoring seraphs,—convince every unbelieving man of the truth of Christianity,—cure every disease, assuage every pain, transform our slums into pleasure-grounds, our oppressors into philanthropists, our criminals into saints,—why is it not done? There must be something in the nature of things standing before the Divine Mind as a reason for abstaining from this transformation.

*Mr. Tresacre.* But if "the nature of things" is perfectly arbitrary, why not alter the nature of things?

*Dom Hincmar.* Precisely, that is just my point. This

Nominalism, or Voluntarism, is the undoing of philosophy. God is not sheer Will. I turn to the pages of the Intellectualist St. Thomas, and read in his *Contra Gentiles*, Book I, cc. 44-54, how God's Essence, fixed and definite, understanding Itself, sees thereby in Itself the type of all that can be made in any likeness of Itself, and thus is the one self-conscious Exemplar of all possible creation. That central Essence is fixed and definite, antecedently to any volition. So then is the periphery of possibilities definite and determinate, antecedently to volition. The Will of God supervening (according to our manner of conceiving it) upon this definite kingdom of possibilities, can actuate in creation only what it finds already possible, and in such sort as it finds things possible. God is one Idea virtually manifold. His omnipotence cannot do violence to the order of Ideas, founded as that order is upon His own very Being and Essence. Thus He could not create a race of men, to whom it should not be natural to live in civil society and form a State. Any essentially solitary creature that He might create (supposing such creation possible) would be a being other than human: he would not answer to the idea of man. A rational animal cannot be other than social by nature. Do you follow me?

*Mr. Tresacre.* Yes, that is exactly what I was saying at the opening of our conversation; and from that intellectualist aspect of Deity, and the fixed and certain order of the ideal world of possibilities and impossibilities thereupon consequent, I had argued the likelihood of sundry schemes for the amelioration of the universe, that present themselves to our imagination, being beyond the capacity of Omnipotence to carry out, by reason of their involving impossibilities and essential contradictions, to us unseen, but plain to the Divine Eye. But a clerical friend acutely objected that while this theory accounts for much not being done that appears to us feasible and desirable in the way of good, it does not account for the presence of so much downright evil, both physical and moral, seeing that the Divine Essence cannot be the pattern of any evil. "While God's omnipotence," said my friend, "must be checked by the rest of His attributes, there is nothing in the attributes of God to render evil necessary in creation."

*Dom Hincmar.* We have found salvation so far in a piece of Platonism; and we must look for a further deliverance from the difficulty which you have just quoted, by borrowing again of that great philosopher. Plato, I have often thought, in some respects saw further into the mystery of things than any other mere philosopher before or since. The doctrine of Ideas, as we have used it, modified by the exemplarism of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, shuts out as chimerical many suggestions of an improved creation: for actuality can be created only on ideal lines, and ideal lines are not arbitrary, but natural and essential. But that does not meet your friend's objection. It must be met by another piece of Platonism, to be found in the *Timaeus*, or rather in the *Sophistes*. By the recent action of the Curators of the Bodleian Library, who, beaten by the accumulation of books, have decided to sell their lumber, a number of ancient periodicals have been thrown on the market, and some of them have found their way out to India. Our Abbey has purchased out of the Bodleian spoil a complete set of a Catholic magazine called *The Month*, which commenced about the year 1864 and seems to have terminated its existence in 1950. Anything fresh from Alma Mater has a charm for one in this distant region. So, one unusually sultry day, to find some recreation and respite from the heat, I betook myself to this recent importation from Oxford, and looked through many a volume of Jesuit lucubrations, whose slumber in Bodley's vaults no reader had ever disturbed. I found much that was worth keeping, and not a little that posterity might have been spared. But to the point. In the November number for 1898 I found an article on "The Great Doctrine of Necessity," somewhat jerky in style, but Platonic, and therefore to me interesting. Here it is, still legible, though mildewed. The writer quotes the passage from the *Timaeus*, pp. 30-53, about a "visible universe in inharmonious and disorderly movement . . . elements without plan or measure, . . . altogether in that state in which it is likely for things to be when God is away." This self-existent primitive chaos he dismisses as an absurdity, and then goes on: "But if we replace the Primeval Chaos by Primeval Nothingness, we have the Dualism of God, the Infinite Being



on the one hand, and perfect Nothingness, or Nonentity, on the other. To the second member of this combination we must look for the origin of evil. . . . The element of Nothingness enters into every created being. This element means defectibility and consequent proneness to evil. God cannot create a creature free from this element of nothingness and defectibility : for He cannot create a creature that shall not be finite and limited. . . . We may plausibly conjecture that it would be impossible for God, because against the nature of things, to create a universe which should be from the first one vast Heaven, with no evil, physical or moral, anywhere. Such an all-blameless universe is an impossibility, it is a child's dream, as much as a round, square triangle is an impossibility. The element of Nothingness is too all-pervading, it must issue in evil somewhere, wherever creation comes to be. This is the necessity (*ἀνάγκη*) of evil, rooted in the very nature of finite and created things, and not to be eliminated thence even by the wisdom and omnipotence of God. Even God fights not with this necessity, as the Greeks truly said : He can only allow for it, and by His Providence secure the final ascendancy of good in creation."

*Mr. Tresacre.* The explanation strikes me as ingenious and plausible philosophically, but there are theological difficulties touching the state of Adam before his fall and the state of the Blessed in Heaven.

*Dom Hincmar.* For them I must refer you to the article itself, which I will put into your hands to peruse at the end of our conversation.\* I think we have said enough on the divine omnipotence. In refusing to allow God to be represented as sheer Will, arbitrarily fixing possibilities and impossibilities, proprieties and improprieties, good and evil,—we have the support of St. Thomas and the soundest Catholic theologians. In our further speculation on the extension of natural impossibilities, extending so far as to render a world without evil a thing metaphysically impossible and therefore beyond the scope of divine omnipotence,—we have floated out on clouds of con-

\* The article is reprinted by the presumed permission of the long since defunct last Editor of the defunct periodical.—ED., July, 2020.



jecture, of which the best that can be said is that they are conjectures not irreconcilable with Catholic faith, conjectures, too, which may afford solace to souls perplexed, as so many are perplexed, over the mystery of evil in relation to the goodness of the Creator.

*Mr. Tresacre.* I gauge the value of your arguments, and appreciate their drift. We both of us believe by faith in a good God, presiding over a world essentially good which, however, has come to be in many accidental incidents deplorably evil. Having faith, we further would fain eke it out by some philosophy.

*Dom Hincmar.* Just so. But it is time to pass to what we have called the second element of our problem, the benevolence of God towards men. Benevolence is not like omnipotence, wisdom or goodness. These latter are attributes of God as He is in Himself, and are infinite with His infinity. But benevolence towards man is an aspect of God in regard of creatures. As it is of God, it is infinite, God being one simple infinite act. But as it is *towards creatures*, it is not infinite: for God never does and never can pour out the whole energy of His being upon creatures. To put it plainly, God does not will absolutely all good to men, nor even as much good as they are absolutely capable of receiving. He wills their good in a measure, under limitations fixed partly by the nature of things, as I have explained, and partly by his own free discretion. He wills each individual man so much good as fits in with the scheme of the universe which He has designed.

*Mr. Tresacre.* Ah, there I catch sight of a piece of Thomism. "God wishes man's existence for the sake of the perfection of the universe," says St. Thomas (*Contra Gentiles*, I, 86). Words to me alarmingly suggestive! What if the well-being of man be but a secondary consideration in the eyes of the Creator? What if man be subordinate to something else in creation, which God loves more and cares more about than He cares about the happiness of man? \* We have given up geocentri-

\* So man, who here seems principal alone,  
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,

—as Pope suggests in his *Essay on Man*.

cism for Copernicanism in astronomy : the earth is no longer the centre about which the universe revolves. Is not a second Copernicus destined to come again and cast out anthropocentricism from our teleology? If the world is not made in the first place for man, but in the first place for some other purpose high above him, to which he is to be sacrificed, we may well cease to wonder that man finds the arrangements of the universe in so many respects inconvenient and from his point of view evil.

*Dom Hincmar.* Before giving such a theory a place on our list of things possible, we ought to be able to name some object in the universe, better than man, thereby with some probability to argue that to this object man is subordinate in the order of Divine Providence. What object shall we name? Angels? Or the stars? Surely, for nothing that man can do or suffer will any angel be better off, or any star. To come back to this visible earth, to what should man be subordinate on earth? He is by far the noblest creature that earth bears on her bosom. This higher object, then, to which man is supposed to be sacrificed is what Newton would have termed not a *vera causa* : there is no evidence of its existence outside of the hypothesis which it is conjured up to substantiate ; and not being a *vera causa* it has no place in philosophy.

*Mr. Tresacre.* What do you think of the hypothesis theologically?

*Dom Hincmar.* That it is contrary to biblical and Christian tradition, which invariably represents man as the head and final cause of all things upon earth. *Let him rule the fishes of the sea and the birds of the air : fill the earth and be lords thereof* (Gen. i. 26, 28). *Fill the earth and be lords thereof* (Gen. ix. 1), is said to Noah and his sons even after the Fall. *The earth he hath given to the children of men* (Ps. cxiii. 16). And St. Ignatius says, in laying down the fundamental Principle of his *Spiritual Exercises* : "The rest of the things on the face of the earth are created for man." But most of all is this tradition evident in the words of the Creed : "Who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven, and was made man." If the Incarna-

tion was for man, then all the rest of this earthly economy must be for man's sake. And this is the maxim of Catholic theology, *omnia propter electos* (2 Tim. ii. 12 ; Mark xiii. 20).

*Mr. Tresacre.* The elect being but a portion of humanity,—what about the rest ?

*Dom Hincmar.* Of that presently. Briefly, for the moment, I should reply with Bishop Butler that God's Providence, like Nature, is selective.

*Mr. Tresacre.* I return to the notion of the perfection of the universe. I have heard that perfection explained in this way. Perfection comes of contrast. Suffering is necessary as a foil to pleasure, misery to happiness, squalor to luxury, vice to virtue, evil to good, hell to heaven. All the elements of the universe are necessary, each in its place, to bring out the perfection of the whole ; and though some particulars are evil, all are good in the general end which they subserve. As Pope says again :

All discord, harmony not understood :  
All partial evil, universal good.

Here, without further ado, you have the solution of the problem of evil.

*Dom Hincmar.* Enough for a poet, but not for a philosopher. Considered as a thesis in philosophy, the *Essay on Man* would not earn for the writer a Doctor's cap, nor even a Bachelor's hood. I admit the principle of contrast, but not its application here. Lesser good brings out greater, but downright evil does not enhance the contrary good. The lodge at the gate sets off the lord's mansion within ; but the hovel disgraces it. A nobility presupposes commoners : that society would be absurd in which all were dukes. But nobility is none the nobler for pauperism and destitution following in its train. Westminster is none the more majestic for the fetid slums of its purlieus. Park Lane is not glorified by the courts and yards of Poplar and Wapping.\* Nor do I see that heaven is the

\* This argument is well pressed against the Stoics by Plutarch, *De communibus notitiis*, nn. 13-15, marginal pp. 1065-6 (Vol. VI ; ed. Teubner).

happier for there being a hell. No, Sir, your theory of the perfection of the universe by evil coming in there as a counterfoil to good, won't work. It is against all canons of human intelligence. A scale of goods, greater and less, ascending in harmonious progression, that makes a perfect whole: but evil,—by which I mean privation of the good naturally due to any subject,—is a blot and a stain wherever it is found. This perfection of the universe is a hard nut to crack: let us drop it, at least for the present.

*Mr. Tresacre.* But, having set aside my suggestion, you are all the more bound to show me your idea of the benevolence of God to man manifested in this hard world, where man has so much to endure, and where so many of human kind perish, body and soul.

*Dom Hincmar.* “You are a nice fellow,” as the Platonic Socrates says (*Theaetetus*, 161A), “to take me for a bag of theories.” However, our Abbey is founded to answer inquiries, or, more modest task, to indicate the sources whence an answer may be drawn. Let me refer you then to God's written word. In the second and third chapters of the Apocalypse, seven several messages are delivered to the Angels of the seven Churches. But one refrain runs through all these messages. If we take it as a message to ourselves, we shall be in the way of understanding the nature of our Creator and Redeemer's benevolence in our regard. Ephesus: *To the conqueror I will give to eat of the tree of life* (ii. 7). Smyrna: *The conqueror shall never be hurt by the second death* (ii. 11). Pergamus: *To the conqueror I will give to eat of the hidden manna* (ii. 17). Thyatira: *To the conqueror I will give power over the nations* (ii. 26). Sardis: *The conqueror shall be clad in white robes, and I will confess his name before my Father* (iii. 5). Philadelphia: *The conqueror I will make a pillar in the temple of my God* (iii. 12). Laodicea: *To the conqueror I will give to sit with me on my throne, as I also have overcome and am seated with my Father on his throne* (iii. 21). All which quotations aver that, whatever else God may intend in our regard, He intends to try us ere He crown us: and His benevolence to man consists in



putting His creature in for a fight, sustaining him in the combat, and rewarding him on the condition that he quits himself nobly. We seem here to be in presence of a law of nature, a law of intrinsic propriety from which divine action never swerves, that to intelligent and rational creatures final and perfect good accrues not otherwise than as the meed of victorious struggle. The angels were tempted in the dawn of creation : some fell, others in reward of fidelity were admitted to the vision of God. And so of the Saints. Even the Saint of Saints *in the days of his flesh*, was subject to this rule. *Son as he was, he learnt obedience from what he suffered, and so was made perfect* (Heb. v. 7-9). *It was necessary that Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory* (Luke xxiv. 26), as He said on His Resurrection day. *God is the God of armies*, as the prophets, Jeremiah especially, love to call Him. As St. Francis of Sales said, " God hates the peace of those whom He destines for war." This is what I may call " the law of conflict," and it lies at the basis of the divine economy. Man must know that in this world he is a soldier in quarters, not a visitor in some *Hôtel Métropole*.

*Mr. Tresacre.* I understand that God means man to fight. But does He mean him to be beaten? And, if He does not mean that, why does He send him into the world so badly led, so ill supplied, marching in so many cases to a foreseen issue of sad disaster and irretrievable overthrow?

*Dom Hincmar.* That is the most difficult question in the whole inquiry. But we agreed at the outstart to acquiesce in imperfect results, no better being attainable with our defective vision. The deficiency of the answer must be most manifest just where the difficulty presses most severely. I will give you such answer as I can. For the rest I must leave you to the counsel of the Psalmist, *Spera in Deo et fac bonitatem, spera in eo et ipse faciet* (Ps. xxxvi). I say, then, in the first place that fighting means losses ; heavy fighting, heavy losses ; and a long campaign, many partial defeats. And this remains true even when the armies of the God of Israel are in the field. It is



enough that victory is achieved in the end. Now the victory of God is the salvation of the elect.

*Mr. Tresacre.* And what of the reprobate? Does not God care for them?

*Dom Hincmar.* For them He cares less. I have said that God's Providence is selective. You should read at leisure the last three chapters of the third book of St. Thomas's *Contra Gentiles*. Let me treat you now to one sentence from chapter 162. "When, of men who are detained in the same bondage of sin, God converts some by His preventing grace, and endures others, that is, leaves them to the ordinary course of events, we should not inquire the reason why He converts the one and not the other: for that depends on His mere will, as from His mere will it has proceeded that, of creatures all made out of nothing, some are of higher dignity than others——"

*Mr. Tresacre.* Well, I can read the rest for myself.

*Dom Hincmar.* It comes to this, that the difference between the elect and the reprobate, or between the grace which theologians term "efficacious" and that which they term "sufficient," which is not efficacious, must ultimately be referred to the free will of God, not irrespective, however, of the free will of man, as theologians argue at length according to the principles of their various schools. Our present concern is the benevolence of God to man,—not to the elect only, but to all men, though to the elect more than to the rest. God, I say, has His purpose about every man, a purpose of higher good for some, of lower good for others; but for every individual He has *thoughts of peace, and not of affliction* (Jerem. xxix. 11), if only that individual will fall in with his Creator's purpose. And God puts it in the power of every individual, who comes to the use of reason, to fulfil His purpose over that soul. If the divine purpose, high or low, is not fulfilled, the individual will be at fault, and the defaulter must bear the penalty. God places some happiness, although not perhaps the highest happiness, within the reach of every man, to be his final state, if he will but comply with his Maker's conditions. Some would make a

stronger statement than this ; but the statement, as I have put it, suffices for our purpose. There is nothing in any human experience of sin and suffering to disprove this modest thesis.

*Mr. Tresacre.* But how is it proved ?

*Dom Hincmar.* It is proved *a priori* from what we know alike by reason and revelation of the character of a righteous and merciful God. If the Prime Minister were accused of some petty larceny, it would be vindication enough to show, first, that the evidence was inconclusive, and then to argue from his high character that the supposition was unentertainable. I think we may now pass to the third element of our study,—human wickedness in this life, continued in the next.

*Mr. Tresacre.* Let me, pray, introduce that topic. I should introduce it thus. Some authors speak of the Almighty's " first " design and His " second," His " antecedent " will and His " consequent," as though God's plans were being continually thwarted by the perversity of the creatures whom He Himself creates, knowing perfectly well how they will behave. Is that likely ? Is it not more consonant with divine omniscience and divine eternity to say that God has one entire and consistent plan from the first, a plan corresponding to what comes to be in time the realised sequence of events ? An example : the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria had an only son Rudolf, the heir to his monarchy. Rudolf died a terrible death, apparently by his own hand, in 1889, many years before his father, as God foresaw that he would. Surely, in creating Rudolf with foreknowledge of the end that he would come to, God never really intended him to be his father's successor.

*Dom Hincmar.* If by " really " you mean " absolutely," I agree : but He intended it conditionally, and in that sense " really."

*Mr. Tresacre.* That distinction does very well for human intentions which are conceived in ignorance. Having no timetable, I drive down to the station, intending to take the train, if I find one, otherwise to drive the whole way. I reach the

station, find no train, and drive on. My conditional intention of taking train was quite real, and by "real" I mean, not "absolute," but "serious." But if I knew all along that there was no train, I could have had no serious intention of going by railway.

*Dom Hincmar.* Yes, you might say: "I would go by rail, if there were a train, although I know there is none: I prefer the railway to the long drive, and drive all the way with comparative regret."

*Mr. Tresacre.* But how if I had had the making of the timetable, and might have arranged that there should be a train?

*Dom Hincmar.* Having delegated the office of Traffic Manager to another, you might have thought it wise not to interfere with the liberty of your delegate. God respects the liberty of His creatures, even when they turn it against Him. He meant Rudolf to reign as Rudolf III of Austria, if that unhappy prince chose to govern his passions, which, being well able, he did not choose to do.

*Mr. Tresacre.* But why did not God put him in other circumstances, in which he would have restrained himself at least sufficiently to live and succeed his father? Why permit him to make that unhappy acquaintance which proved his ruin?

*Dom Hincmar.* God is not obliged to keep us out of the temptations in which He foresees our fall. The proof is the fact: He does not, therefore He is not obliged to do it. And would that be a real struggle, a real liberty, a real trial of fidelity, if every sin, foreseen as a consent that would be given to such and such a temptation, were prevented by the temptation never being allowed to occur, and only those temptations permitted in which the victory of the tempted was foreseen? We have no right to call upon God to use His foreknowledge to screen us in that way.

*Mr. Tresacre.* I suppose not. But the difficulty remains a great one. Let me re-state it in general terms. God starts

an individual in life, who He knows will sin, intending to do something with him (call it A), if he does not sin, and something else with him (call it B), if he does sin. But, knowing, as He does, all along that the individual will sin, God's only real purpose, it is argued, must have been B, not A.

*Dom Hincmar.* That is the difficulty, and I have given you such answer as is available. But by way of showing you with what modesty we should speculate on these deep subjects, I am going to drag you down from the depth to which you have gone, to a lower depth, and in that innermost profundity of thought we may find a solution that will surprise us.

*Mr. Tresacre.* Whatever the solution of the problem of evil be, when found, it will surprise the discoverer. The discovery must be startling, to be true.

*Dom Hincmar.* Then prepare to be startled. Are you sure that the Rudolf who met his fatal doom at the castle of Mayerling, being the individual that he was, could have ended his days otherwise than as he did?

*Mr. Tresacre.* Of course he could, on any other than determinist principles. But you have not turned determinist?

*Dom Hincmar.* I opine, even in principles of free will, we may still say in a certain sense that he could not.

*Mr. Tresacre.* How so?

*Dom Hincmar.* First, I suppose with Molina that antecedently to creation God knows what a given individual will freely choose to do, if created. Secondly, I suppose with a modern whom I must not name—and indeed I do not know his name—that “individuality is part of essence,” by which I understand, although I do not know that he so understands it, that every individual is in his individual essence all that he is, and in the same individual essence does all that he does.\* Thirdly, to say that the individual does in his individual essence all that he does, is, I take it, by no means to deny that he does his acts freely, in the sense in which the

\* *Essence* here is used, not of the species, in which sense the term occurs in the logic books, but of the individual.



Catholic Church understands a free act ; but it is to say that all his actions, and even his free acts, are part of his individuality. To suppose him choosing otherwise is to suppose not this individual to exist, but another of a different individuality altogether. The individual Rudolf, essentially as such, freely chooses this line of conduct. His conduct is *essential* to his being exactly the person that he is ; and yet it is not, as determinists say, *necessitated*, or *determined*, by his motives and his character.

*Mr. Tresacre.* My dear Dom Hincmar, should another Torquemada arise, you would be burnt for a heretic.

*Dom Hincmar.* I am not a heretic : first, because I am not contumacious : I submit my whole speculation to the judgment of the Catholic Church ; secondly, because, so far as I at present see, there is nothing in this speculation contrary to the teaching of the Church. It is not pantheistic, and it is not determinist. It preserves the liberty of the Creator in creating, and the free will of the creature in choosing good or evil.

*Mr. Tresacre.* That is a very difficult distinction which you draw between *essential* and *necessary*.

*Dom Hincmar.* Is it a more difficult distinction than that which all libertarians draw between *infallibly foreseen* and *necessary*, as when they say that Adam's fall was infallibly foreseen by God when He created him, and yet this infallible foresight did not necessitate Adam to sin ? The explanation given, as you know, is that to God all events are present in His eternity. Thus an act being *foreseen* by God is no more incompatible with its freedom than is its being seen by us while it takes place before our eyes. You may read this in the *Contra Gentiles*, I, cc. 66, 67.

*Mr. Tresacre.* I have always found it a satisfactory explanation, and my mind has never been disturbed by that difficulty.

*Dom Hincmar.* Then neither let it be disturbed by my distinction between *essential* and *necessary*. Even a free act



may enter into the essence of an individual, and go to mark him as that individual and none other. This is clear to all after the act is done. Thus if anyone asks who Brutus was, the answer characterising Brutus is returned, "Brutus was the man who killed Caesar." The free act of that murder was an individuating note of Brutus from the first to an omniscient mind. Before God, every being is seen in its entire history, *ens totum simul*. On the bank we see the stream of life in section only, as it flows past our standing-place. God's glance takes in from source to mouth the whole river. God creates a type of being, who He sees will do a particular free act of volition: and do it of course he does, otherwise he would be departing from the particular type of his essence, and be some person other than he is; and yet withal he does it freely.

*Mr. Tresacre.* I will do my best to stomach this high-wrought distinction, if I am given time to digest it at my leisure. But now, what do you make of this objection? He who essentially is all that he individually is,—and such you make every human agent to be,—is God.

*Dom Hincmar.* I gladly welcome your objection, for it lends itself to a distinction in the form of the schools. He, then, who absolutely must be, and is essentially all that he individually is, is God,—*I grant it*: he who essentially is all that he individually is, on the supposition of his existing at all, but who absolutely need not exist at all, is God,—*I deny it*.

*Mr. Tresacre.* Then another difficulty. If, as is usually done, we separate free acts from nature and essence, as a sort of voluntary appanage which the individual attaches to his nature, it is easier in that view to screen the Creator from the responsibility of such acts, when they are evil. But if the acts are essentially attached to this or that individual nature, what shall we say of God creating a nature, part of whose individual essence it is to do evil?

*Dom Hincmar.* Your difficulty is no more than the question which has been asked from the beginning of theology: Why does God create individual men and angels whom He knows

will sin? The difficulty has been bequeathed to us by our forefathers, and I am not bound to meet that outstanding portion of it which their replies have failed to cover. However, I may conjecture somewhat and suggest. Be pleased carefully to bear in mind the distinctions that I have laid down already, and now add this supposition. I fall back upon the doctrine commonly held in the schools, that though this is not the best possible universe, *absolutely* speaking, still it is the best possible universe *relatively* to the particular end for which God intends it. I go further and suppose that this universe is an organic whole, in all its multifarious components and operations, one bearing upon another: and that, *thus organically considered*, it is the one universe possible in view of the particular end intended by the Creator. I suppose a number of ends, extrinsic to Himself, to be contemplated by God in the order of pure possibility. To each distinct end a distinct universe answers, creatable to that end, as the one adequate means whereby the end can be realized. Let the ends be A, B, C, D, E, F, etc., and the corresponding universes *a, b, c, d, e, f*, etc., standing related thus:

<i>a</i>	to	A
<i>b</i>	to	B
<i>c</i>	to	C
<i>d</i>	to	D
<i>e</i>	to	E
<i>f</i>	to	F

In the exercise of His free will God selects the end P. The one only means of gaining that end, according to the nature of things, is the universe *p*. Thereupon the Almighty, choosing to have P, an end utterly beyond our surmise, creates as the one possible means of attaining it, the present universe *p*, whereof we have partial experience and knowledge. On my present hypothesis, the parts of the universe are interlocked, like railway signals,—interlocked with one another and with the end in God's view. Another universe might have been created for another end; but this universe, and no other, can possibly realise, as assuredly it will realise, the one mysterious end and purpose,

selected by God out of many, when He resolved upon the present creation.

*Mr. Tresacre.* μέγα λέγεις.

*Dom Hincmar.* καὶ ἐπὶ μεγάλοις. Take that tremendous question which confronts us all ; and which I have just pointed out as the sum of your objection : Why does God create a soul who He knows will sin, and sinning will pass from the body impenitent and suffer everlasting fire ?

*Mr. Tresacre.* The creation of a soul under the usual adjuncts is part of the order of nature.

*Dom Hincmar.* That is a good answer : but why an order of nature in which so many sin, and so many souls apparently are lost ? Of every one of the lost, that may be said which was said of Judas : *It were better for that man if he had never been born* (Matt. xxvi. 24). Why, then, was he born ? Why are born so many such ? The question would be fairly laid to rest if we were able to reply : The reprobate is born because he is part of a universe, all the parts whereof are essentially geared one into another, so inextricably that to remove one would be to remove all. To blot out that reprobate and his career would be to blot out the sun from the heavens and the whole company of angels and saints. Take Judas alone, and you may say truly : *It were better for that man if he had never been born.* But not *better for the universe.* Judas and his like could only have been cut out of existence by this entire universe never coming to exist,—by the whole end of creation being set aside, and another end substituted and another universe subservient thereto. God in His wisdom has seen fit that this particular universe should exist, serving its own special end. Hence we conclude with reason, what indeed is a certainty of divine faith, that the net outcome of the world's creation will be good, not evil. The *new heaven and new earth* (Apoc. xxi. 1) will outbalance in their delights all the miseries of the earth that now is, and in their sanctity and glory all the horrors of hell. Nay, even on this earth and in this temporal estate, considering the Church on earth, we may well say that the good, spiritually

considered, outbalances the evil. In a word, the universe is worth having at the price. So God has created it, and keeps it continually in existence. It would be a bad bargain to get rid of the ills that infest creation by blotting all present created existence : yet that would be the price of such riddance.

*Mr. Tresacre.* With such a drastic solution as you have imagined, we need say no more of human wickedness, nor need we enter upon the fourth element of our discussion,—human suffering in time and eternity.

*Dom Hincmar.* Now we may find time to return to the Thomist notion of “ the perfection of the universe.” Let me read you some striking words of St. Thomas on the relative perfection of the universe, and its solidarity as a whole, converging upon one definite divine purpose : “ Divine providence, being absolutely perfect, arranges all things by the eternal forethought of its wisdom, down to the smallest details, no matter how trifling they appear. And all agents that do any work act as instruments in His hands, and minister in obedience to Him, to the unfolding of that order of providence in creation which he has from eternity devised. But if all things that act must necessarily minister to Him in their action, it is impossible for any agent to hinder the execution of divine providence by acting contrary to it. Nor is it possible for divine providence to be hindered by the defect of any agent or patient, since all active or passive power in creation is caused according to the divine arrangement ” (*Contra Gentiles*, III, 94).

*Mr. Tresacre.* Remarkable language to use of a world that seems to us gone crazy. But I have always felt that there are depths in St. Thomas, appalling depths, which our textbooks fail to fathom.

*Dom Hincmar.* Understanding by the “ perfection of the universe ” its perfect adaptation to that one particular end which it was expressly and in all things designed to serve, let us observe these further words of St. Thomas (*Contra Gentiles*, I, 86) : “ The perfection of the universe necessarily depends on the good of some particular components, which are essential parts



of the universe ; on others it has no necessary dependence, although even from them some goodness or beauty accrues, such things serving the sole purpose of the fortification (*munimentum*) or embellishment of the rest."

*Mr. Tresacre.* A pregnant saying indeed, if applied to mankind, not at all favourable to the democratic principle that one man is as good and as considerable as another. But let that pass.

*Dom Hincmar.* The saying may be otherwise expressed thus, that, while all things serve the purpose of their Creator, some things serve it *per se*, other things *per accidens* and by concomitance, worse things being bound up with better things in that teleological concatenation which makes the universe one and good.

*Mr. Tresacre.* You mean that there is no "unsecured cargo" in the hold of the ship called the World.\*

*Dom Hincmar.* Just so. I should wish to wind up what I have had to say to you by the enunciation of a few aphorisms, which all Christians will accept.

1. Evil in this world is never "ordinary" (*per se*), it is "incidental" (*per accidens*). It is the corruption of something that normally works for good. It is beside the intention of Nature, not her express contrivance. This point is insisted upon by all the Schoolmen, and is ably illustrated by our old friend Paley.

2. Animal well-being is the rule, pain the exception. There is much more of the former than of the latter. Likewise more good deeds than evil deeds. I do not speak of deeds supernaturally good, or heroically good, but of human acts in themselves right and correct, and fraught accordingly with natural goodness.

3. A quotation from Mr. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*,

\* On the "perfection of the universe," see further Plato, *Laws*, X, 903, whence the whole notion seems to have emanated; St. Thomas, *Contra Gent.*, II, 44, n. 1; III, 64, n. 8; III, 112, n. 6.



p. 185. "If you wish to refute a wide theory based on general grounds,"—as is the belief in the goodness and power of God,—  
"it is idle merely to produce facts which upon it are not explained,"—he is speaking definitely of error and evil. "For the inability to explain these may be simply our failure in particular information, and it need imply nothing worse than confirmation lacking to the theory. The facts become an objection to the doctrine, when they are incompatible with some part of it: while, if they merely remain outside, that points to incompleteness in detail and not falsity in principle. A general doctrine is not destroyed by what we fail to understand. It is destroyed only by that which we actually do understand, and can show to be inconsistent and discrepant with the theory adopted."

4. They who believe in the goodness and omnipotence of a Personal God, likewise believe in a life to come to which the present life is preparatory and subordinate. Therefore anyone who draws an argument from the evils of the world against the goodness and omnipotence of the Creator, assuming throughout his argument that this world is man's sole and final resting-place, is guilty of *ignoratio elenchi*: he ignores the position which he pretends to attack.

5. Haply, the Eternal reckes not very much of temporal suffering in an everlasting nature.

6. We are put into this world, not to theorise about evil, but to wrestle with evil and overcome it.

7. Christianity on earth is essentially militant, struggling against evil, believing in good in spite of appearances to the contrary, trusting supremely in the goodness of God and in the ultimate prevalence of good for the men of His good will.

8. The central mystery of Christianity is Christ Crucified,—God become man, not to explain evil, not to banish it from earth, but to bear it, to suffer for it, to convert it, to fertilise it.

9. Instead of a removal of evil, or an explanation of evil,

the Christian is given Christ Crucified and Risen again, and told that he must follow the same way.

10. The mind that has parted with Christianity encounters the problem of evil in quite another shape from that in which the problem is presented to the Christian. To the Christian, sin is a free choice of evil ; to the non-Christian, who is usually a determinist, it is a work of nature. To the Christian, sin is a thing to seek forgiveness for : to the non-Christian it is irreparable : nature never forgives. To a Christian, pain,—a vastly less evil than sin,—is a thing to be rewarded when borne in company with Christ Crucified ; also it is expiatory through Christ. To the non-Christian, usually, sin is only evil as being ultimately painful ; and pain is commonly a dead loss. This life is short to the Christian,—short and preliminary and provisional : to the non-Christian it is the whole of his individual existence.

Some notion of the final perfection of the universe, and of the end for which God created it, may be found in *Waters that go Softly* (Burns and Oates, 1907), in the chapter on Heaven, pp. 162 sq. *All things for the elect*, says St. Paul (2 Tim. ii. 10).



## APPENDIX A

*Reprinted from "The Month," November, 1898*

ἀλλ' οὐτ' ἀπολέσθαι τὰ κακὰ δυνατόν, ὦ Θεόδωρε, ὑπεναντίον γάρ τι τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἀεὶ εἶναι ἀνάγκη· οὐτ' ἐν θεοῖς αὐτὰ ἰδρύσθαι· τὴν δὲ θνητὴν φύσιν καὶ τόνδε τὸν τρόπον περιπολεῖ ἐξ ἀνάγκης. (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176A.)

*Ego Dominus, et non est alter, formans lucem et creans tenebras, faciens pacem, et creans malum.* (Isaias xlv. 7.)

*Si erit malum in civitate, quod Dominus non fecerit?* (Amos iii. 6.)

*Contra malum bonum est, et contra mortem vita: sic et contra virum justum peccator. Et sic intueri in omnia opera Altissimi. Duo et duo, et unum contra unum.* (Ecclus. xxxiii. 15.)

*Omnia duplicia, unum contra unum, et non fecit quidquam deesse.* (Ecclus. xlii. 25.)

*Ne forte colligentes zizania, eradicetis simul cum eis et triticum. Sinite utraque crescere usque ad messem.* (St. Matt. xiii. 29, 30.)

*Necesse est enim ut veniant scandala: verumtamen vae homini illi, per quem scandalum venit.* (St. Matt. xviii. 7.)

*Oportet et haereses esse.* (1 Cor. xi. 19.)

IN proving the existence of God, at the beginning of the *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas raises the objection: "If there were a God, no evil would be found." To which he replies by a quotation from the *Enchiridion* of St. Augustine: \* "God, being the sovereign good, would nowise permit any evil to be in His works, were He not powerful and good enough to make good even out of evil." To which he adds himself: "It belongs therefore to the infinite goodness of God to permit evils to be, and to draw good out of them" † On this basis is founded the usual answer of Catholic theologians to the difficulty of the

\* C. II. † 1a, q. 2, art. 3.

existence of evil, a difficulty, however, of which they do not profess to have forthcoming anything like an adequate solution. All the theological battles that have been fought over the Fall of Man,—Calvinism, Jansenism, Thomism, Molinism,—have been fought in some attempt at a solution of this mystery. The existence of evil is the one final difficulty of all speculation and practice, of all theology and philosophy, and of daily life. I propose to follow this speculation some little way out ; to put together some ideas, not new, but perhaps not sufficiently thought of ; to conjecture which way the solution may lie ; to prove no thesis, but indicate what may be a sufficiently tenable and provisional hypothesis.

The hypothesis is briefly this, that creation without evil is a contradiction in terms : that evil is a natural and necessary incident of all created good : that if God chooses to create at all, He must permit evil to be in creation : and that this natural simultaneity of created good with evil is no more an infringement of divine omnipotence than is the impossibility of God's creating any triangle, the three angles of which, taken together, shall be equal to anything else than two right angles. A mathematical illustration of good and evil mutually involving one another may be seen in the second branch of the hyperbola, which is one curve with the first, though opposite to it ; to generate the one branch is to generate the other.

But the best illustration is from a doctrine untenable in itself, yet closely parallel to that which I now suggest as possibly true. The Greek philosophers had no conception of creation out of nothing. They assumed the existence of Matter, eternal, not having the origin of its being from Mind, or God. They assumed a primeval chaos. Mind, or God, did no more than put this chaos in order. All the order, and consequently all the good, in the universe they attributed to the disposition of Mind. Mind, or God, was author of all good, and of nothing but good. But the primeval, chaotic Matter was never perfectly amenable to Mind : it was essentially a disorderly thing, and could never be got quite into order. This resistance of Matter to the disposition of Mind the Greeks called *ἀνάγκη*, *necessity*.

It is well, before we go further, to illustrate this, not merely



philosophic but popular conception of the Greek mind. I have often been amused in scholastic disputations, listening to the argument that God is a necessary Being, or one whose existence is a necessary truth, to think how shocked any pious Greek would have been to have heard the epithet *necessary* applied to God. Necessity to a Greek meant the stolid opposition of brute matter, or of superior physical force, to the purpose and design of Mind. Thus if a storm carried you out of your course at sea, if pirates seized you, plundered your vessel, and sold you into slavery, if your ship caught fire and you could not put it out, if you had a scarcity of water or of other provisions, all that was necessity,—anything, in fact, that baffled your calculations and checked your aspirations. The very word ἀνάγκη is connected with ἄγχω, *ango*, *I choke*, and ἀγκών, an *angle*, or *corner*; ἀνάγκη is that which *chokes* or *corners* you.

We find a proverb in Simonides, ἀνάγκη δ' οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται, “even gods fight not with necessity.” Necessity here does not mean *destiny* (ἡ εἰμαρμένη), but the brute resistance of matter to the intelligent and benevolent purposes of Mind. Thus death, disease, accidents, storms, earthquakes, and also bodily propensities to evil, and all evil-doing, which was traced by the Greeks entirely to bodily propensities, were put down to the account of Matter, to the account of something originally independent of God, and never entirely subjected to and regulated by the Divine Mind. If you had asked a Greek philosopher about the origin of evil, he would have told you that Matter was evil to begin with; and that all evil, physical and moral, was the outcome of the never wholly remediable turbulence and disorder of Matter. From this notion it followed that the union of the spirit of man with a fleshly body was a misfortune, and that things would never go wholly well with the human soul till it was parted from Matter, never to be reunited to a body again.

The reader may observe this doctrine in innumerable passages in Plato. I quote two: “God wishing all things good, and no evil to be, so far as that was possible, with this intent, finding (παραλαβών) the whole visible universe, not at rest, but in inharmonious and disorderly movement, He brought it out

of disorder into order, thinking the second state altogether better than the first. . . . Before this, all the elements were without plan and measure: but when the ordering of the universe was taken in hand, fire first and water and earth and air, though they presented some traces of their proper selves, yet were altogether in that state in which it is likely for things to be when God is away. So they were by nature to begin with, but He marshalled them in species and number. God then combined and compounded them, the fairest and best that might be made out of materials that had been neither good nor beautiful (*ἡ δυνατόν ὡς κάλλιστα ἀριστά τε ἐξ οὐχ οὕτως ἐχόντων*).''\*

I need not dwell on the untenableness of this doctrine, pointing out that a self-existent chaos is a contradiction in terms, self-existence being an attribute that carries with it all perfections; or that the doctrine leads up to Manichean Dualism, as it makes of Matter an essentially Evil Principle; or that it cuts at the root of the Christian mysteries of the Incarnation, the Holy Eucharist, and the Resurrection of the Body. But if we replace the Primeval Chaos by Primeval Nothingness, we have the Dualism of God, the Infinite Being, on the one hand, and perfect Nothingness, or Nonentity, on the other. To the second member of this combination we must look for the origin of evil.

It is a remark of Plato,† taken up by Aristotle and St. Thomas, that everything *is* in one way, and *is not* in an infinity of ways, according to the infinity of things that are other than it. Thus: the element of Nothingness enters into every created being. This element means defectibility, and consequent proneness to evil. God cannot create a creature free from this element of nothingness and defectibility: for He cannot create a creature that shall not be finite and limited. So far the argument is philosophically clear. From Catholic faith and theology we know that God can hinder this natural defectibility from issuing in actual moral evil in this or that individual. Such an exercise of power He put forth on behalf of the Blessed Virgin Mary. From the same source we know

\* *Timaëus*, pp. 30, 53.

† *Sophistes*, 256E.

that God can and does *sterilise*, so to speak, this element of nothingness, and exclude all evil from a whole class of beings, whom, after trial, He admits to reward, the reward consisting in the beatific vision of Himself in heaven. What we do not know, and yet may plausibly conjecture,—and the present paper is written to put forward the conjecture,—is that it would be impossible for God, because against the nature of things, to create a universe which should be from the first one vast heaven, with no evil, physical or moral, anywhere. Such an all-blameless universe is an impossibility, it is a child's dream, as much as a "round square triangle" is an impossibility. The element of Nothingness is too all-pervading, it must issue in evil somewhere, wherever creation comes to be. This is the *necessity* (ἀνάγκη) of evil, rooted in the very nature of finite and created things, and not to be eliminated thence even by the infinite wisdom and omnipotence of God. Even God fights not with this necessity, as the Greeks truly said : He can only allow for it, and by His providence secure the final ascendancy of good in creation.

But now a theological difficulty. God created Adam in paradise, surrounded with happiness: and but for his transgression, certainly no necessity, we should have all lived immortal in the midst of that happiness. Thus, then, all things were very good to start with, and, it would appear, there was no evil anywhere. First, I reply, with regard to the lower creation, it is a perfectly gratuitous supposition that they were free from pain and death, and did not prey upon and devour one another even in paradise. Secondly, had Adam not sinned, theologians tell us that of his posterity every man would have been tempted and tried somehow, before he was admitted to his reward in heaven. Thus tempted and tried, I should consider it certain that some of them would have sinned, and have been punished accordingly. Thus paradise, had we all remained there, would not have been a region of unmixed good. But enough on this obscure subject.

I presume my reader to have enough of scientific knowledge, or at least of common observation, to be aware that physical evil, decay, pain, sickness, liability to accident, death, and mutual

destruction, is a necessary appanage of vegetable and animal life. Take these things away, and you have no animals or vegetables. About the risen body of the just, which is to be impassible, we are told expressly that it is not to be an animal body.\* About moral evil, or sin, there is more difficulty : for what is necessary in conduct is excusable and not sinful.

Sin must be an act of free will, not conditioned in the nature of things. Why, then, could not God have created a race of absolutely sinless beings, remaining sinless? I am far from affirming positively that He could not. I think, however, I have some reason for thinking that He could not, not from any defect of omnipotence, but because of an impossibility lurking in the nature of things. The argument, *never found, therefore impossible*, is indeed inconclusive in the way of rigid demonstration: still it often carries probability; and, strengthened by the addition, *never found, where there was much cause for expecting it*, it carries even a higher probability. Now, first, God never does place rational creatures in a state of perfect happiness and sinlessness, till their fidelity has undergone a trial. This is an observed law, or uniformity, of divine action. The obedience of angels was tried before they were admitted to the beatific vision. Man was tried in paradise; and even though Adam had not fallen, as has been said, still every one of his posterity would have been tempted and tried ere he was translated to heaven. So unvarying is this rule, that the Son of God Himself, becoming Man, must needs be tried with suffering, and learn obedience from what He suffered, ere He could enter into His glory.† Secondly, when a whole race of rational creatures are tried, some have always given way and sinned. In the case of men this is too patent. For the angels, see 2 Peter ii. 4; Jude 6. Have we not here some ground to conjecture that free will, tested for its fidelity in a whole race of creatures, necessarily imports sin? *To conjecture*, I say: for there is no hope of perfect proof. Nor is this supposed necessity incompatible with free will. Free will is an individual gift, and no individual will is necessitated. The necessity is racial, not personal. *Scandals must come*, says our Lord:‡ they are a

\* 1 Cor. xv. 44. † Heb. v. 8; St. Luke xxiv. 7, 26, 46. ‡ St. Matt. l.c.



necessity of the race of free creatures under trial : *yet woe to that man by whom scandal cometh* : woe to him who makes what is a necessity in the race an event of his individual free choosing. If it be asked how there can be a necessity which is not a necessity in any individual, let it be observed that where there is real trial of free will there is real likelihood of sin : but a multitude of such likelihoods mean a necessity of sin somewhere. At least this is a tolerable explanation in a subject so difficult.

Evil, then, is a necessary incident of created nature : physical evil, of all nature ; moral evil, of rational nature, or of a race of rational beings. To bar evil would be to bar creation. God, however, is the author of nature directly : He is not the author of evil except indirectly and incidentally, inasmuch as He wishes and makes that to be, to which evil necessarily attaches. There is no Evil Principle, or direct cause of evil, independent of God. To mark the truths thus formulated, Isaias\* wrote in God's name : *I am the Lord, and there is none other, forming light and creating darkness, making peace and creating evil.* And Amos† asks : *Shall there be evil in the city that the Lord hath not done?* If He had not created (indirectly) darkness and evil, He could have formed no light and made no peace : if there were no evil, there would be no city. Willing the city to be, God must tolerate the evil. Willing the wheat to grow, He must allow the cockle, or tares, to grow up with it, till the harvest.‡

*Till the harvest*, that is, till the day of judgment ; then He will bind the cockle in bundles to burn, and gather the wheat : then He will separate the sheep from the goats, the wicked from the midst of the just : then He will wipe away every tear from the eyes of the just, and death shall be no more, nor sorrow, nor cry of pain, nor toil.§ Then evil and good shall be no longer blended on earth : but there shall be a region of pure good, and a region of evil, heaven and over against it hell : and the men who are in one or other of those receptacles shall be there according to their deserts. Thus a world of perfect goodness

\* l.c.                      † l.c.                      ‡ St. Matt. l.c.

§ St. Matt. xiii. 30, 49 ; xxv. 32 ; Apoc. xxi. 4.



will be at last reached, but over against there will stand evil, evil now cast out and cut off from good. The evil shall not be annihilated, but isolated. We must observe, as I have said before, that this perfectly good world is attainable only by passing through a world of trial, wherein there is and must be much evil. This condition is always observed by Divine Providence: it may well be a condition dictated by intrinsic necessity.

This is not a theory of fatalism. Necessity, as I have already said, is not fate or destiny, unless indeed one will ascribe the necessary truths of mathematics to destiny, and make all mathematicians fatalists. We do not expect Omnipotence to reverse the properties of triangles: we know it cannot, because of the intrinsic absurdity of such a proceeding. It has always seemed to me that the region of intrinsic absurdities and natural impossibilities, which even God cannot modify, because they are determined ultimately by the Divine Nature itself, is much wider than we commonly suppose, and extends beyond the domain of the exact sciences far into the region of physical and concrete realities. Thus there may be an intrinsic and necessary connection between the human form and the possession of intelligence in an animal: if so, an intelligent creature in the shape of a camel will be as intrinsically impossible as a circular square. I have tried to show how the element of nothingness, or not-being, out of which all creation is drawn, and the vestige of which ever clings to every creature, may perhaps make a created world with no evil anywhere an intrinsic impossibility. To persons of a dogmatic habit of mind I would again point out that this is not a proved thesis, only an hypothesis, which offers itself as tending possibly in the right direction towards the solution of a problem, never wholly soluble to mortal man, why our Creator, good and wise and almighty as He is, tolerates the evil that we see around us infesting His work.

I do not know a sentence in any philosophy of profounder truth or more mournful beauty than the sentence of Plato, the original of which heads this paper, and may thus appear in English: "Well, it is neither possible for evils to be annihilated, Theodore, for there must ever be some undergrowth of opposition to good; nor yet for them to gain footing and find place in

heaven : but this mortal creation and this region of earth they haunt and compass of necessity." So then it seems that to annihilate evil would be to annihilate the world. "All things are double," as Ecclesiasticus says,\* "good against evil, life against death ; the sinner against the just man ; and so in regard of all the works of the Most High, two and two, and one against one."

\* l.c.

## APPENDIX B.

τὸ μὴ ὄν.

GOD being, as St. Thomas represents Him, sovereignly one and simple (C.G., I, 21-24, 45, 46, pp. 16-19, 33, 34), and all His Knowledge consisting in the cognition of that one simple Object, Himself (C.G., I, 47, 48, 55-58, pp. 34, 35, 40-43), we may reverently raise the question, Whence can God obtain the cognition of multiplicity, seeing that there is no actual multiplicity in that which is the sole object of His Knowledge,—I mean no multiplicity in His own simple Essence, by knowing which He knows whatever He does know?

The question cannot be answered by recurrence to the mystery of the Trinity: for “that God is Three and One” is “beyond all the competence of human reason” (C.G., I, 3, p. 2); and therefore it is a maxim of Catholic philosophy never to recur to the Trinity for the solution of a philosophical difficulty. If the only way out of an ἀπορία of philosophy is to posit Trinity in Deity, we have come to something like a philosophical proof of the Trinity. Again, we must not say that God discovers multiplicity by considering His manifold creatures: for that would suppose God to create blindly, not having the concept of multitude before Him antecedently to His creation of a multitude: He would then learn by creating, which is absurd. The difficulty is beyond our speculation, and it would be a piece of temerity and irreverence to put forward any answer and call it a solution. But there is no harm in our observing that, besides God, there is something which necessarily and eternally stands over against God, something which we may call the shadow of God, something other than Himself which God must know in knowing Himself. What is that? Is it the world? Not on other than pantheistic principles. The world is not necessary to God; and has no existence but for His free will to create it (C.G., II, 23, p. 90). That which eternally and

necessarily stands out against God is *sheer downright Nothingness*. Nothingness (τὸ μηδέν, —not οὐδέν,—the Greek conceptual negative μὴ is the saving of a great philosophical distinction), Nothingness, I say, has no being whatsoever; and thereby stands in extremest opposition to God, who is eminently the fullness of all being. And yet, though it has no being, Nothingness, I say, is a quasi-reality, meaning by “reality” a valid object of thought: it is a quasi-reality, not in its own right, but as something which clings to Being, and is necessarily understood along with Being, as a sort of foil to Being, or as I have called it already, the shadow cast by Being in the light of intelligence. Nothingness is a negative reality, but a quasi-reality still,—a quasi-reality necessarily apprehended and conceived by every one who has any notion of positive reality. God therefore knows Himself, and in knowing Himself He knows that which (apart from His free creation) lies outside Himself, namely, sheer blank Nothingness,—*purum putidum nihilum*, τὸ μὴ ὄν, τὸ μηδέν\*. That Nothingness is a sort of reality, inasmuch as it is an object of thought, should startle no one as a novelty, whether in philosophy or in mathematics. Mathematicians elaborately discuss various cases of impossibility, things being impossible in as many manifold ways as they are possible: yet the impossible is pure Nothingness, and even below nothingness; it is not and cannot be.

In philosophy, the conceptual reality of τὸ μὴ ὄν was taught 2,250 years ago by Plato. I translate from the *Sophistes*, 258: “The antithesis of Being and that which is other than Being is, if I may say so, no less of a reality (οὐσία) than Being itself. . . . And we must now say courageously that Not-being assuredly has its own nature.† . . . Not-being has a reality as Not-being (ἔστι μὴ ὄν), and may be counted as one variety (εἶδος) among the multitude of realities.”

Not-being, however, or sheer Nothingness, is not a reality as God is, nor even as creatures are: it is a negative reality: we may call it an “anti-reality” or “counter-reality.”

\* If you were to tell a Greek that οὐδέν lay outside of God (οὐδέν ἔξω τοῦ θεοῦ), he might well take you for a pantheist. Your speech would mean that nothing was excluded from, and therefore everything included in, God.

† Nay is of various natures, as mathematicians show.

Not-being enters not at all into Godhead, but is wholly excluded from it : for God is the fulness of Being, and in all ways possible He eminently *is*. But into all creatures Nothingness enters, inversely according to the perfection of the creature, for every creature *is* in one way, and in manifold other ways *is not*. I have argued that this element of Nothingness, pervading all creation, is the weak point that gives entrance to evil.

It may be objected that, on this explanation, the more of Nothingness and the less of Being anywhere, the more there should be of evil, till we arrive at perfect Nothingness, which should be perfect Evil ; whereas in fact evil is at its height in the highest beings : evil being either moral (sin) or physical (suffering) : there is none of it in the midges that flutter about and bite on a summer evening, while there is terrible evil among mankind, and more terrible still in the fallen angels. St. Thomas answers : “ Evil is nothing else than a privation of that which a thing is apt to have and ought to have ” (C.G., III, 7, p. 189). Evil, then, is a *privation*, not a mere *negation*. Evil cannot exist by itself, it must be in some subject, and every subject is some good (C.G., III, 11, p. 194). Thus τὸ μὴ ὂν, sheer Nothingness, is itself no evil at all ; albeit, as we have seen, it is the origin of the possibility of evil. Nothingness would be an evil only if, in the nature of things, all possible creation “ ought to have existence ” (St. Thomas, l.c.) : nothingness (τὸ μηδέν) would then be a privation, not a mere negation : but that is an absurdity : nothing (οὐδέν) outside God has any claim to existence. But privation is more grievous, the higher the being that suffers it : thus the higher nature is ever open to the greater evil, as the more truth there is about a lie, the worse the lie. Blindness in a man is worse than blindness in a horse : that a statue cannot see, is no evil at all. Sin in angel is worse than sin in man : sin in Christian worse than sin in heathen. And when suffering invaded the Flesh and Soul of One, who for His Godhead was inaccessible to Sin, His suffering in soul and body during His Sacred Passion was, we may reverently surmise, the keenest agony, the worst physical evil, that mortal man has ever endured.



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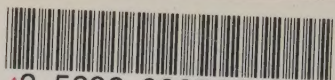




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